The Catholic Record

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LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 1921

THE INCONSISTENCIES OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT

Ernest F. Scott is a Professor in Union Theological Seminary and therefore we might suppose the very embodiment of that basic principle, the very corner stone of Protestantism—private interpretation of the Scriptures. Yet in a recent address he made this remarkable statement:

"There can be no greater mistake than to assume that while the religious ideas of the New Testament are often difficult and need experts to interpret them the social ideas can be grasped at once by anybody."

The learned Doctor in Israel was rebuking those socialists and communists and others whose doctrines menace the comfort and disturb the complacency of the possessing classes in the present social order. But by what authority does the Protestant theological Professor deny to these proletarian agitators the right "to search the Scriptures"? By what authority does he deny their right to come to their own conclusions after exercising their right of private judgment?

Ah, yes. They are not "experts." And since when is it become a recognized principle of Protestant theology that "the religious ideas of the New Testament are often difficult and need 'experts' to interpret them"? And who shall decide if "experts" disagree?

"There can be no greater mistake" than to think that "anybody" can grasp the social meaning of the gospels! He does not openly deny the first and fundamental principle of Protestantism so far as religion is concerned; but he conceives the "social ideas" of the Gospels as something distinct, and he assumes that for either the religious ideas or the social ideas, "anybody" ought to submit his inalienable Protestant right of private judgment to the superior judgment of "experts" in these matters.

"Not a little of the popular exposition of the social teaching of the New Testament," he continues, "is misleading and mischievous, and tends to identify Christianity with movements to which it is utterly repugnant."

Is not this denying the Scriptures to the laity? What is the good of private judgment if it must be revised or interdicted by "experts?"

Catholics hold that as the Church, founded by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, is the guardian and interpreter of Holy Writ we are bound to submit our judgment to that of the Church. Catholics have always held with St. Peter that in the Epistles of St. Paul "there are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." Therefore the Catholic position is intelligible and logical. We do not submit our judgment to "experts," but to divinely guided and divinely constituted authority; to the teaching body in God's Church, the legitimate successors of the Apostles whom Christ commanded to teach all nations; with whom He promised to be unto the consummation of the world; to whom He promised the infallible guidance of the ever-abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth.

This logical and Scriptural position of Catholics on the reading of the Bible has been the object of cheap but persistent Protestant invective. Yet they always had their "experts" in spite of their boasted Protestant freedom to search the Scriptures and receive direct therefrom their own message. "Experts" at best are a poor and humiliating substitute for the living voice of divine authority speaking through the Church, and that it was and is an utterly inadequate substitute is proclaimed by the countless divisions produced by private judgment despite the 'expert" guidance.

A letter in The Globe the other day is to the point:

To the Editor of The Globe: I have just read a letter from your issue of recent date wherein a "Presbyterian Elder" calls attention to a statement in The Christian Guardian that in the United States there are 30,000 churches without pastors, and that there is a dearth of ministers of the Gospel in Canada, making an appeal for more. Is it not a fact that in many parts of Ontario we have too many churches? I have in mind as I write 26 churches in a radius of 12 or 15 miles—one village with five churches for 1,300 people; three hamlets with from 150 to 400 people with from two to three churches each, and the rest at crossroads, concessions and side lines covering four townships. All but three are Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist or Anglican, and in all the same Gospel is preached. They were no doubt all built with the very best intentions, but I think time is proving that it is all wrong. As there is only one God, there should be but one faith and one Church.

J. F. LILLICRAP.

Lakefield, Ont.

Through the mists of misrepresentation and despite the bias of education and tradition, Protestants are beginning to see that private judgment, the mother of division, is incompatible with that unity which was to convince the world of Christ's divine mission.

We do not know that the writer of the above letter would follow his reasoning to its logical conclusion; but that logical conclusion is patent to Catholics who learned an all-important Scriptural truth in this answer in the Catechism:

"As there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, there is but one true Church." (Eph. iv. 15; 1 St. John, iv. 5, 6; Heb. xii. 7, 9.)

CATHOLIC LANDOWNERS IN IRELAND

In the course of a masterly summary of the Penal Laws in Ireland—which we shall publish next week—Seumas MacManus writes:

"The Irish Catholic was forbidden to purchase land. He was forbidden to lease land. (From this clause in the Penal Laws arose the Irish saying that 'a man dead and buried has 'a Protestant lease of the land.') He was forbidden to take or give a mortgage on land. He was forbidden to buy land, receive a gift of land or land, from a Protestant. He was forbidden to inherit anything from a Protestant. He was forbidden to lease land that was worth more than thirty shillings a year. He was forbidden to reap from his land any profit exceeding a third of the rent.

"If he was discovered owning more land than the law allowed a Papist—or reaping more profit from land than a Papist should—all his possessions were confiscated to the first Protestant who discovered on him."

These were not the whole of the Penal Laws—far from it. But these were the chief provisions with regard to Catholics and the land, the land of their own country. These laws—of which the land laws were but a part—were intended, writes the Protestant historian, Lecky, "to make them poor and to keep them poor, to crush in them every germ of enterprise and degrade them into a servile race who could never hope to rise to the level of their oppressor."

The span of two moderately long lives carries us back into the time of these laws which "were invented by demons, written in human blood and registered in Hell." Under these laws our Catholic ancestors lived for generations.

With this historic back ground "A Study of Religious Statistics in Ireland," by Father P. J. Gannon, S. J., furnishes some supremely interesting and gratifying facts. In the matter of agriculture and the land, the mainstay of Ireland, we find that this industry is today in the hands of Catholics more than at any time since the Plantations. The position, in this respect, has improved even since the last census. The coming census is awaited with lively interest.

Formerly tenants, mostly Catholics, were driven out. Their holdings were then consolidated and handed over to Protestants. In recent years exactly the reverse process has been in operation. There has been a redistribution on a fairly extensive scale, notably in the province of Connaught, of the large ranches; and, almost without exception, the new proprietors planted upon the land are Catholics. This has been accomplished under the system of state aided purchase inaugurated first in a substantial way in 1885. Apart from the operations under this system a lot of property in the rural districts has in the course of private transactions passed from Protestants to Catholics. With the result that in the South and West Protestant congregations have dwindled so much that parishes have had to be amalgamated.

Even in the Protestant Counties of Ulster transfers of the character mentioned have taken place. "Hence," observes Father Gannon, "we can fairly conclude that even east of the Bann and North of the Mourne mountains the Catholics are true to Parnell's advice and are 'keeping their grip upon the land' while Protestants are waging a very bitter war to prevent them from invading the cities and the towns." This policy must ultimately react upon the promoters of the pogrom because the cities and towns are dependent upon the rural areas.

The increase in Catholic peasant proprietors indicates a three-fold gain. Besides the increase in itself the renewed activity in tillage means a larger demand for agricultural labor which in turn is an antidote to emigration. Again, better and more extensive farming means augmented business for the towns, and under normal conditions of government this leads to increased prosperity and employment in the towns.

As a matter of fact Catholic merchants and storeowners had begun in the South and West, prior to the present dislocation, to extend their business. Another aspect of the agricultural industry is that in the Catholic districts the farmers have formed great co-operative societies with a central organization of which the eminent Jesuit, Rev. T. A. Finlay, is President. Between the land and the banks there is a close connection. The banks operate with their deposits. The chief depositors are the Catholic farmers. Certain banks mainly controlled by Catholics have in recent years made the greatest progress. One of them, at first only a mere provincial institution, has branches today in every part of the country including Belfast. One of the strongest proofs of the dependence of the banks upon Catholic customers is the fact that they have intimated to the British Government that it is impossible to work the Partition Act.

What has really happened is that the Catholics of the South and West, resenting both the expulsion of Catholics from employment in Belfast and the design of the Orangemen to disintegrate Ireland, have in large numbers withdrawn their custom from Northern banks, thus curtailing the supply of credit available for business purposes in Belfast. In numbers, in industry, trade, commerce and finance, Catholics are today powerful enough to make it plain to all concerned that while they can very well dispense with the old ascendancy oligarchy, neither in Ulster nor elsewhere in Ireland can the ascendancy party get along without the wealth-producing and land-owning Irish Catholics.

Despite the savage vandalism which has wantonly destroyed many millions of pounds worth of Catholic property this conclusion remains true and it makes credible this St. Patrick's Day despatch to The Globe:

New York, March 17.—The Philadelphia Public Ledger publishes today a copyrighted despatch from Carl W. Ackerman, in Dublin, to the effect that certain basic terms of a possible Irish settlement have been tentatively agreed on by persons in authority.

The despatch states that Premier Lloyd George has expressed a willingness to negotiate personally with Eamonn De Valera, President of the Irish Republic; that the British are ready to declare a truce with Sinn Fein without insisting that the Irish first give up their arms, and, further, that the Government is willing to grant Ireland fiscal autonomy under a Dominion Home Rule Bill.

The despatch says that Ulster leaders are willing to confer with De Valera or other officials of Sinn Fein relative to the unity of South Ireland and Ulster, and a fiscal policy for a united Ireland. It is implied that if Ireland can be brought to the point of negotiation the question of amnesty for Sinn Fein leaders who have carried on guerilla warfare against the Crown forces will not form an obstacle to the settlement.

The news that Ulster and Lloyd George are ready to talk amicably with the South of Ireland toward an adjustment of affairs is regarded as favorable to an early settlement. Mr. Ackerman points out, however, that the consent of the Sinn Fein executives and the powerful Irish interests in America is necessary before further negotiation is possible.

BISHOP FALLON AND THE MAIL AND EMPIRE

Bishop Fallon's rankling criticism of the British Government's course of action in Ireland made no reference whatever to what the Irish bishops of his church frequently mention, viz., the wanton murdering by Sinn Feiners of constables and soldiers. There would be no "reprisals" if there were no original outrages.—The Mail and Empire, March 18th.

"Rankling criticism" is good; The Mail and Empire uses the proper adjective.

Yet every day newspapers, publicists, and public men in England have condemned in more scathing terms than Bishop Fallon ever used the suicidal madness of the discredited clique who are responsible for the shame that the chaos in Ireland is bringing on England.

"We must condone or condemn" as the Bishop truly said. There is no third course for honorable and loyal British subjects.

If the Mail and Empire functioned honestly as a newspaper its readers would be quite familiar with the fact that the independent and uncontrolled press of England, the ablest and most fearless of her public men, have denounced the perpetrators of the present horrors in Ireland as the worst enemies of British prestige, the British good name, and British interests.

But this British public criticism "rankles" in the small hearts of pseudo-loyalists, so that little or none of it is carried in the columns of the Mail and Empire. If the Mail's notion of loyalty were true then it is the names of the sycophants, whom history has consigned to oblivion or to obloquy, that should take the place in those glorious pages now given over to Stephen Langton, Simon de Monfort, Hampden, Pym and the rest who were loyal in the truest sense when loyalty called for moral courage and fidelity to conscience, truth, justice and liberty.

CONSPIRACY TO FIX PRICES

BY THE OBSERVER

The conspiracy to fix prices in Canada is a formidable attack on the freedom which many people suppose to be a matter of course in this country. Freedom is never a matter of course. Oppression is always possible; and it is most dangerous when most carefully cloaked under the outward forms of freedom.

Let me give an instance: I know of a case in which a young merchant was selling goods at prices lower than other merchants about him. One day a representative of manufacturers called on him, and said: "If you want to handle our goods, you must charge as much as the others are charging."

This is a specific and authentic instance of what I call a conspiracy to fix prices. There have been enough such instances brought to light during the investigations of the Board of Commerce, to show how widespread and general this pernicious practice is in Canada.

The practice is contrary to law; but manufacturers and wholesalers, and their combines, whilst ready enough to note and denounce any violation, or threat of violation, of law, on the part of a labor union are not willing to obey the law themselves; in fact they are determined to violate it.

Where is the much talked-of law of supply and demand? What is its course, and how does it operate? Its course is directed by combines and associations; and it operates just as they want it to operate, and not otherwise. Of course, circumstances sometimes prove too strong for any combination of individuals or companies. Just now, there is some recession in prices, despite every effort to keep them up. But let no one imagine that any drop in prices that may take place this year, or next year, will prevent artificial manipulation of prices in the future.

Years before the War, the evil of trade combines had invaded Canada. Some fourteen years ago, I had a conversation with a commercial traveller, selling rubbers and rubber boots for one of the leading manufacturers in Canada. I had heard there was an agreement; and I asked him about it. He was frank about it; and told me that there was an agreement, as to prices, as to the time the travellers should start on their selling trips; and that, in fact, nothing was left them to compete about but the quality of their goods.

Before the War, long before, it was well known that in several leading staple lines, prices were agreed upon and dictated to the retailer. That evil system has now become quite general. Where, then, is commercial freedom; where is the independence of the retailer to deal with his customer; where is the law of supply and demand?

And what of the consumer? Where, in all this vast conspiracy, is the unfortunate public who pay, and pay, and pay; pay profits and pay wages; pay producer, and manufacturer, and jobber, and wholesaler, and retailer; pay transportation; pay overhead charges; pay maintenance; pay all; pay everything; from a 600 per cent. dividend down to a postage stamp?

Their position is, that they are the victims of a vast and comprehensive conspiracy; and up to the present no one has attempted seriously to relieve or in any way help them. How will this evil be cured; for cured it must be. No sane man can suppose that this huge plunder can go on permanently. How will this conspiracy be broken up? It ought to be broken up by the enforcement of existing laws; the passage and enforcement of such other laws as may be necessary; by the intervention of authority in legal and constitutional ways.

If that is not done, it will be broken up otherwise. The plundered people may have the patience and good sense to stop buying from the conspirators, and to become themselves their own producers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers by the way of co-operative production, distribution, purchase and sale.

But another way is possible; and it is one to be dreaded. All this cynical exploitation of the public may cause a popular outburst which may shake and even break, some of our most valuable and necessary institutions.

How long will a whole people be plundered without striking back? How long will a people be content to see their courts occupied with punishment of small thefts whilst robbery in millions goes on without any effective interference?

The profiteers will take a chance. An English king is said to have made the cynical comment, at a critical moment, that England would lost his time, and he didn't care what happened after that. So, perhaps, may feel some of the pirate chiefs of Canadian commerce. They will take a chance.

Let no one imagine they have given up, or will give up, because prices are going down somewhat, their intention of conspiring still to regulate the price of every morsel of our food and of the clothing we wear, and the things we use in the building and the furnishing of our homes.

They are going right ahead; despite occasional set-backs. They were at it before the War. The War gave them Canada in their hands; and they do not intend to relax their grip.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

AN IMPORTED evangelist, fresh from the Methodist Mission in Rome, has been giving advice to a congregation of Italians in a Methodist conventicle at Toronto. He told them to "drop their superstitions" and to "take Mazzini as their great pattern." Mazzini was opposed to the Pope, therefore he was a "theologian," and a "simple, God-fearing man." He was safe in telling this to the kind of audience he had before him, for their knowledge on such subjects could hardly have extended beyond what the lecturer was pleased to tell them. That Mazzini, whatever his virtues otherwise, was an undisguised agnostic, and knew no God save Italian Unity was discreetly kept in the background, a circumstance in full keeping with Methodist tactics in Italy, as manifested by the notorious American mission in Rome.

LAST WEEK we had something to say about Savonarola, the great Florentine Dominican, whom a Presbyterian minister of Toronto includes among his "pioneers of Protestantism." The solitary instance of misjudgment which has been interpreted by some as defiance of the Holy See, is thus described by one of Savonarola's historians: "These cries for help (from those who lamented the relapse of Florence into the old ways from which Savonarola had redeemed them), reached the Friar in his lonely cell. His fiery heart, ever throbbing with burning zeal for the salvation of souls, thrilled at the thought of the people's misery. He was carried away by the rushing torrent of his impetuous zeal, and yielded to the appeal. It was no wilful act of disobedience, no premeditated rebellion against the Pope's supreme authority. It was the impetuous act of an ardent nature, of a heart burning with love for God and man, a heart whose every fibre was quivering with pity for the souls he saw perishing everywhere around him. He felt convinced that the Pope would never have prohibited him from preaching, had he not been misled by lying reports. Under such circumstances Savonarola considered that he was not bound to obey."

THIS WAS the one misstep of the Friar's life, and it was fatal in its consequences. He was excommunicated, then denounced by his enemies as a traitor and a heretic, and, taken in custody by the civil power, was executed. It is said that when the facts were laid before the Pope, the latter regretted the consequences of his action. And so far was Savonarola from separating himself from the Church that he died fortified by the Holy Sacraments, and his last words were: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Farther, some of the greatest Saints have reverenced him as one of themselves. St. Philip Neri, who knew him intimately, always kept his portrait in his room. So, too, did St. Catharine de Ricci, and many of the later Popes have spoken of him in terms of the highest praise. Pope Benedict XIV. even declared him worthy of canonization, and his writings, which have undergone searching examination in several pontificates, have been declared perfectly free from error. To classify him, then, as a "pioneer of Protestantism," is to play fast and loose with words. It is a flagrant breech of intellectual honesty, into the bargain. But what can be expected of men who see no harm in bogus "masses," and call deliberate and organized deceit by the venerable name of "evangelism."

IT IS gratifying to know that preparations are in hand for revival of the Eucharistic Congresses discontinued by the exigencies of the War. At a meeting of the Permanent Committee, held in Paris some months ago, reorganization was effected, and new members of the Committee elected to replace those who had died since the Lourdes Congress of 1914. The business of these elections, the confirmation of results of that event, and the inauguration of preparations for renewal of those wonderful manifestations of faith made up the proceedings of the meeting. The place and date of next congress will not be announced until they have been passed upon by the Holy Father. Canadians will have fresh in their memories the Montreal Congress of 1910, and will await with eager anticipations the next to be held on this side of the Atlantic, whenever that may be.

"WHO BEGAN IT?"

That is the question the Right Honorable Mr. C. E. G. Masterman, ex-Cabinet Minister has lately asked, and has answered: "Sir Edward Carson began it. Was there one policeman attacked, before Ireland was humbugged, flooded, slandered, plotted against, raided, plundered, burnt, murdered—for two years 1917-18?

"Here are the facts, and let us get them by heart; list one can say you're the criminal, and the other "your're the liar; and liar he is until he acknowledges these facts here set down:

"In 1917, no police killed in Ireland. But Irish houses raided; 350 men and women arrested: 24 political leaders hauled out of their country without trial; meetings suppressed; men, women and children beaten; newspapers suppressed; savage sentences for seditious speeches, etc.; two civilians murdered; five died in prison from ill-treatment. Not one of the Government criminals brought to justice.

"In 1918 no police killed in Ireland; 260 private houses raided by night; 1,100 Irishmen and women arrested for their Irish politics; meetings suppressed; men, women and children wounded; many of the 1,100 political prisoners maltreated; five civilians murdered by military; fairs and markets suppressed; no punishment or even reproach for the murderers.

"The Irish people in 1917-18, showed, what a distinguished foreign visitor called an almost criminal patience. They devoted themselves to preparing—by English form of law, under the English constitution—for the election of December, 1918, to show the English and the world, peacefully, and constitutionally, what they asked for. They had their reward in worse persecution.

"Therefore, in January, 1919, the first policeman, as persecutor and spy, was shot; and throughout 1919, sixteen, most of them in conflict with men less well-armed than they.

"In 1919, 14,000 houses were raided at night by armed soldiers and police; 335 meetings suppressed. The elected Government and every other national organization declared illegal; 476 armed attacks on orderly gatherings; 260 men, women and children wounded, 989 arrests for politics; 20 more leaders deported; 25 papers suppressed; 8 civilians murdered.

"In 1920. More arrests, deportations, raidings, lootings and wrecking of houses. Sacking of towns and murders of civilians more frequent; mills, factories, creameries wrecked; in an attempt to starve the people into submission to English rule and practice again theory.

"Those were the answers to the municipal elections of January, 1920, repeating the constitutional demand of the people for self determination.

"In June, 1920, at the rural elections 83% of the people declared for independence. Therefore, in the following three months 74 towns were sacked; and 43 innocent men murdered by police and military. Flogging of men and boys, and torturing of prisoners, and attacks on women and children became a regular part of England's terrorism in Ireland.

"Absurd, therefore, to say that murders of police caused the policy of which they were the result. It was Gessler began it, not William Tell. (And if there have been 100 armed police killed, there have been hundreds of unarmed Irish killed). The plan of the so called Government is not to suppress murder and restore law and order, but to suppress a people and to restore over them a lawless domination whose infamies they hate and whose spirit they despise."

SOME VERY CANDID OPINIONS

LYING OF NO USE

Lloyd George may continue to deny anything and everything including his own dismal failure, but as the London Daily News points out: "The actual result of the shootings, the burnings, the press gangs, and the whole paraphernalia of martial law, carried to monstrous excess, is now notorious throughout the civilized world. No hushed up reports or brazen official denials can any longer conceal the fact that Irish resistance is stronger than ever, because the tyrannical methods of the Government have closed up its ranks and added to them numbers of those who were neutral, or even pro English, as well as the vast majority of the women throughout the south and west of Ireland."

GOING DOWN HILL

"But really," writes the editor of the Manchester Guardian, "so long as the Government has the responsibility for the notorious 'Weekly Summary,' with its obvious encouragements to crime among the Irish guerilla police, it is hardly worth while to discuss the measure of seriousness in the Premier's faint and equivocal disclaimers. A Government that allows its officials to circulate incentives to misconduct among its own armed forces can only pass, among the other Governments of the world, as a Government of bad character, not their own equal, and not to be regarded as a desirable friend. It is chiefly in the case of America that this rapid loss of caste is immediately injuring our national interests. * * * But, in the eyes of every other civilized nation as well, we are going downhill."

FAILURE ABSOLUTE

"One thing is certain * * * that the policy of reprisals as now carried on will never be successful, and that Cromwellian brutality will neither be tolerated in this country nor achieve its intended end in Ireland."—Lord Denbigh, in The Times, (London) Feb. 18, 1921.

BACK TO THE JUNGLE

"Every new infamy wrought by the Government, every new atrocity, every indiscriminate murder, every creamery sent in flames to the skies, deepens the wrath of an outraged people. It drives into the ranks of Sinn Fein every moderate influence that should be with us, just as the criminal policy of the Allies towards Russia, has driven into the ranks of the Bolshevists thousands who are not Bolshevists, but who have no other means of defending the independence and liberty of their country. Every crime and folly we commit recoils on us in the accumulated anger of a people who will perish rather than submit to an alien tyranny.

"I do not say that the policy of reprisals is to be judged by its success or its failure. Civilized society perishes when the law makes a hideous mockery of itself. When we read of the armed police shooting as they pass by a woman nursing her baby in her garden, and when we know that this represents the universal supersession of law by violence, we have reached a pass in which all the sanctity of law is extinguished, and we are back to the jungle." The Daily News, (London, Eng.)

(SIR) HAMAR GREENWOOD'S "EXPLANATION"

Sir Hamar Greenwood protested recently that the threat published in his Weekly Summary issued to the