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THE IDEAS OF A CATHOLIC AS TO WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

Translated from the French of Abbé Martinet, for the True Witness.

(Continued from our last.)

3.—HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW RELIGION, AND TO MAKE IT KNOWN.

We have within ourselves the germ of truth, at least since we received the elements of religious instruction; but the means of culture and of fructification come to us chiefly from without. What shall we obtain without the sun, the father of every plant which hath life?

God has created two great lights, inseparable from each other, but one greater than the other. The magnificent luminary raised above the world, and never to set till the end of time, is the Church possessing and diffusing from pole to pole the full light of truth, in so far as it can appear to the eye of mortal man.

The lesser luminary is human reason, prone to disappear in the clouds, and even to be totally eclipsed, when pride interposes between it and the sun of truth; but so long as it keeps in connexion with him, it yields a mild, soft light, suitable to the suffering eye which cannot yet bear "the radiance of the risen day."

Let us open the windows of our soul. Let us admit the first light by every possible channel. Before and above all, it is necessary to know exactly the doctrines of the Church; to distinguish, in matters of faith and morals, what is of obligation, from what is not; the article of faith from the established dogma; the latter from the opinion, merely approved or tolerated; the precept from the counsel.

To this study—and it is, doubtless, somewhat dry and tedious, but, nevertheless, indispensable to the solidity and precision of religious instruction,—it is necessary to add that other, which gives it fecundity and life; to enrich the soul with that divine sap, which flows in such abundance from the ocean of the Scriptures into the writings of the holy fathers and the masters of the spiritual life.

Let us also admit the second light. Let us hear, and read, the Christian philosophers. By revealing to our minds the numerous connexions between faith and reason, they will teach us the art of attaining religious truth by the truths of nature, and to confute those who reject revealed religion, on philosophical grounds. Let us not imitate the heretic, who, avoiding the light of day, shuts himself up in the abyss of the Scriptures, with the rush-light of his own reason. The book of truth presents only phantoms to his mind, and to his heart, fruits spoiled by the worm of doubt, and tasteless as those from which the juice has been extracted.

Let us study much, but let us meditate still more. Erudition covers the earth with good grain; the grain misses, and is picked up by the birds, or trodden down by the passing foot, if the labor of reflection do not sink it deep enough to produce a vigorous growth.

Reading has furnished you with many religious ideas: you cast them forth to the public; each will find therein more or less of religious intelligence, but none will find therein the full measure. That multitude of grains must be ground and kneaded, in order to make it first for you, and then for others, the bread of the strong.

Instead of flowers, fruits, or detached branches, the tree itself must be presented, high enough to give a view of the heavens to the eagles, who love to soar in the upper regions of sublime contemplation; blooming enough to attract the butterflies, who take pleasure in flying from flower to flower; sufficiently abundant in fruit to satiate famished souls, and with strength to resist the efforts of the strongest arm.

To those who can only perceive its shade, you will shew the mild and cheering light which fills and surrounds it. You will point out the calm retreats hidden in the depth of its foliage, for those souls who would fain repose in the mysterious shades of the infinite, untroubled by the phantoms of illusion.

Yes, let us meditate much and often. How many tongues, and how many pens are consecrated to the divine cause, with comparatively trifling success! Must there not be something wrong in their method? Eighteen centuries ago, twelve tongues and eight pens, undertook to make the word of Christ triumphant, in the midst of a world which worshipped every error, and every vice. Twenty years after, the universe presented in every region a multitude of fervent adorers of Jesus Christ.

It is true that these tongues obtained miracles from God, and made the dead to speak; but those miracles yet live in history, and it is for us to bring them forward. Let us enter the libraries wherein are deposited the immortal remains of the holy fathers, and we also shall make the dead to speak. And then as regards contemporary miracles—are they ever wanting to us?

The great power of the Apostles consisted in this,

that they were wholly absorbed in the truth, and sought only its complete triumph. Caring little for what the world might think of them, provided that it thought and acted as they did, they announced the word of life which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled! They overcame idolatry, and false philosophy, not by crushing them beneath the weight of their own absurdity, but by confronting them with the light of the gospel.

If our word enlightens but little, it is because we have seen but little; if we move others but little, and inflame not their minds, it is that we ourselves are but little touched, still less inflamed. In our books and in our words, we seek ourselves too much for others to seek our books or our words.

Yet it is not in energy that we are deficient. We declaim, and harangue: how is it that the number of neophytes does not increase? It is, perchance, because the thunder and the lightning of such discourse, may terrify, and destroy, but remain unproductive, unless the earth be watered by the early rain; well prepared, and covered with good seed.

We refute too much, infinitely too much; we do not teach enough, and it follows that our refutation itself is defective and insufficient.

The world has its back turned towards the altar of truth; it bows down to error borne in triumph through the public places. Instead of assailing the latter, and seeking to draw her votaries back to the foot of the altar, which cannot be done without violence, we should bring down the divine unknown from her throne. Let her come with her incomparable majesty, her celestial charms, to confound her unworthy rival, fix every eye, and subdue every heart. Content yourself with an occasional thrust at the insolent assailants who obstruct her way, or sling dirt upon her. Too much attention to the insults of these wretches, would give them an importance which they, of themselves, have not.

Let us beware of degrading that daughter of heaven, by attiring her after our own fashion, loading her with the gew-gaws of our imagination. She has herself portrayed her own loveliness, in the book which she presents to us: therein do we find the divine features which ought to embellish, and to animate the body of doctrine; therein are prepared those colors, which are to make life sparkle on the great canvas, where the hand of the Church has traced with precision the plan, and the forms of faith. That genius is but a very inferior one, which cannot give to religion enough of glory to cast itself into the shade.

Let us then penetrate into the depth of the Scriptures, catechism in hand, the lamp of tradition by our side; and instead of going forth, like the spendthrifts of the Bible, who load themselves with a provision of texts, to fling right and left at the heads of the passers-by, we shall move on like Moses, carrying the word which subdues the nations, and adorned with that divine halo of doctrine, which attests our intimate communion with the Deity.

(To be continued.)

THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLICITY ON THE CIVIL INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES—THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF THIS INFLUENCE.

A LECTURE BY THE RT. REV. DR. O'CONNOR. Delivered in Masonic Hall, Pittsburgh, 17th March, 1852, for the Benefit of St. Paul's Orphan Asylum.

The occasion which has called us together is one which awakens recollections, and recalls objects of a peculiar character. We have come to honor the memory of St. Patrick—of that Apostle who planted the standard of Christianity in Ireland. His career was a most remarkable one. Few, if any, professed to believe in the doctrines of that religion when he landed upon its shores; and at his death, more favored than that other Bishop, who rejoiced that fewer heathens remained in the land than he had found Christians when he went there, Patrick saw the whole people initiated in one faith, and left all of the inhabitants of Ireland united to Jesus Christ.

Different from most other nations, Ireland did not find it necessary that the blood of martyrs should be shed before the seed of Christianity took firm root. That sad necessity was avoided for centuries, and when at last it came, the blood of Erin's children was shed in the name of Christianity, and by the hand of the stranger.

The faith of Ireland had made it renowned for many centuries;—students from all parts of Europe flocked thither, receiving at the same time nourishment and instruction, and her sons associated with those of England, went to carry instruction to those nations from which civilisation had been swept away. They left their names inscribed on the mountains and valleys of Germany and Switzerland, as well as on the plains of Belgium and France, and even Italy

itself; and successfully propagated the faith in which Patrick had instructed their forefathers.

We have come to this country—I say we, for I am confident that many of you, like myself, are from the land of Patrick—we have come to this country, not bringing riches of gold or silver; we have not come distinguished in a special manner for the possession of many of those arts which immediately contribute to the material prosperity of a nation, but I perhaps do not flatter myself when I say that we have brought what is more precious than gold or silver—the sacred deposit of our faith. The important advantages, even of a temporal kind, flowing from that faith, will enable us to repay the generosity with which we have been received. We owe it to ourselves, and to the other inhabitants of the land, to speak clearly and boldly of the nature and of the claims of that faith which we possess, for our gratitude should lead us to tell the advantages that we can afford to others, and should be of a nature not unbecomingly generous souls to give or to receive.

Some may suppose that there is something like presumption in saying that our religion has anything to do with the civil institutions of the United States; other systems of religion claim these as peculiarly their own, and men ask with defiance—What has Catholicity done for them?

It is not my intention to enter upon a topic which has been lately treated by the illustrious Archbishop of New York, who undertook to prove, and, I think, satisfactorily proved, that Catholics have ever showed a firm and unalterable adherence to the Institutions of this country, and have done their full share in developing and perfecting them. Though you may deem it startling, allow me, however, to say I claim more—a much greater share for Catholicity in the formation of the Civil Institutions of the United States.

We are living, to be sure, in a country which is rapidly increasing in power, and extending the blessings of its government to millions—a country which we see advancing with giant strides, and when I am asked what Catholicity has done for it, I will illustrate my position by referring to what I consider a parallel case. Suppose I now stood, as I did not long ago, under the vaulted ceilings of York Minster or Westminster Abbey, or in the majestic Cathedral of Canterbury, I might, it is true, hear chaunted a service with which I could not sympathise—a doctrine preached which I could not adopt. If any one, however, would point to the noble buildings themselves and ask if Catholicity could produce anything equal or like, what would be my reply? Why, that it had erected them. I would not find it necessary to go abroad for illustrations of what Catholicity could do. Others might pray or preach now in these temples, the usher might conduct men through their almost deserted aisles for a shilling; the worn steps on which millions adored when England was Catholic, gave abundant proof that the structures were erected by men of another faith, and all knew that that faith was the Catholic.

I will not hesitate to say, and I think I will be borne out in the assertion, that the institutions of the United States, glorious as they are considered to be, like the Cathedrals of England, are substantially the work of Catholic hands.

They certainly were not founded during the present generation. They were transmitted to us, all will admit, by the men of the Revolution, and what did they do? They threw off the yoke of Great Britain, they declared themselves independent of English rule, but did they found any new institutions?—any new system of government? Certainly not. All the great principles of the government which they organised, pre-existed; they existed before the Revolution, and it was the boast of those engaged in that struggle, that it was undertaken in defence of invaded liberty.

Let us look at the matter somewhat in detail; and, first of all, let us ask what is the best and main portion of our jurisprudence—the great bulwark of our institutions? Every enlightened man will tell you it is the common law of England. Even to-day, if you enter the courts of justice in this country, on what principles will you find the law expounded which governs these States? On what principles will you find the law resting which regulates the intercourse between man and man? On that of the Common Law, which is in force in every State in the Union; or, at least, in those States, the inhabitants of which descended from English ancestors.

On this our institutions were founded; it constitutes the most valuable portion of our system, and the most distinguished writers on jurisprudence have not hesitated to point out this Common Law as the best ever invented by man, not even excepting the Justinian Code itself.

Now, had Catholicity anything to do with the formation of this prized Common Law? Why, it is wholly the production of Catholics. It was the law

of Great Britain before Protestantism existed, and while Catholicity was its only religion. The Justinian Code had its origin in the days of Paganism, though it was modified by the infusion of Christianity. The Common Law was entirely the product of Christian—of Catholic agencies.

In fact, whatever men they think of its origin, whether, as some say, it is a system originating in customs that gradually grew up in the nation; or, as others suppose, it is a system of enactments, particularly of the days of Alfred, the records of which are now lost, no one can trace it back to any other than to a Catholic source.

And I would here remark that this Common Law, (this noblest part of our system, presents features very analagous to some of those considered most objectionable in Catholicity. It was founded upon tradition, by tradition it was transmitted, and, like Catholicity, was expounded by tribunals established for the purpose. It was deposited in the heart and mind of the nation, the nation being always conscious of its true character, and no man can say that it ever was or can be written so fully as to make the living sentiment of the nation unnecessary for its protection. Records of authoritative decisions may be brought forward, the writings of the sages of other days may be appealed to to define the one and the other. Both may be said with truth to be now, and to have been long since written, as far as a living principle be grasped by ink and paper, but the vital principle that understands, transmits, and speaking through legal organs, applies and decides, is the real preserver and expounder, both of Common Law and of Catholic tradition. In the Church, it is the principle of life inspired by God, and destined to remain there forever; in the state, it is the life infused chiefly by a heaven-born religion, its faith and its institutions.

We thus find in Catholicity the origin and the type of the great vivifying principle of the noblest portion of our institutions.

Going further into details, you will find that all the principles which have been ever considered the cardinal points of the constitution, came down from Catholic times. For example, the principle that asserts the necessary connection between taxation and representation does not owe its origin to the Revolution. It was in defence of that very principle that the colonists revolted. Nor can its origin be traced to the days of the Reformation, for it goes back farther than the recorded memory of man can reach, and existed as one of the cardinal principles of Catholic England.

And let me here say that the Reformation was introduced into England only after, and by a partial, though, fortunately, not a permanent, overthrow of the system of representation. It was only by destroying the character of old English parliaments that a Henry was enabled to separate England from the unity of the Catholic Church. And as Henry did, so you will find did many of his successors. They encroached upon the system of representation first by holding long Parliaments, and then by bribery, parceling out for this purpose the spoils derived from the robbery of the Church, and so with other things, until the liberties of Old England—of Catholic England—seemed almost to have passed away.

Nor was the system of representation which prevailed in ancient times, a fictitious one, for all estates were represented, and all had a right to make their voices heard. It was only in the time of Henry the Sixth, that a forty shilling freehold property qualification was required to constitute a man a voter; up to that time all the inhabitants had a voice in the selection of their representatives. We find the broad principles of English representation laid down in the writ of summons addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the twenty-third year of Edward the First. From this it appears that what regarded the interests of all the various estates, was to be regulated by an assembly, in which all were to be represented; and what was the interest of a part of the people, was under the control of that portion. And what was their power?

It may be gathered from the fact, that more than once they called on the monarch in the same manner as they would on a county officer or sheriff, to give an account of his stewardship. Nay, in more than one instance, they deposed him. This was the case with Henry the Second and Richard the Second, and the aspirants for the succession presented themselves before the representatives of the people with as much deference as if the government had been declared Republican.

The representatives then enquired rigorously how the sovereign had disposed of their money, and though the right to declare war was vested in him, if Parliament did not approve of the war they would tell him to go and fight his own battles, as was several times the case when war was declared against France, and would give him neither men nor money.