



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. III.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1852.

NO. 1.

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

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

20.—NECESSITY OF SHOWING THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN EVERY POINT OF VIEW—FAVORABLE DISPOSITION OF MINDS—CHRISTIAN POLICY.

We have indicated some of the numerous phases of the religious question. It is more than ever necessary to display them before the eyes of a world which is only indifferent from ignorance, or from want of reflection.

To those who give religion a province, more or less extensive, in the domain of science, let us show that it is the beginning and the end of true knowledge, and that it acknowledges no other limits than those of sovereign truth, which has no bounds.

To those who give it a part, a function in political organism, let us show that the function is that of the soul in the body, and that death begins wherever its vivifying action is stopped.

To those who choose to see nothing in the world but business and interests, let us prove that the affair of religion is at the head and at the bottom of all others, and that material interests find solid security only in their subordination to that of religion.

Such is the grand thesis which the Catholic press should lay down before a world so advanced in the way of error, as to see (and shudder at the sight) the abyss opening beneath its feet, and to feel the necessity of falling back towards God.

This good work was promised, more than twenty years ago, by writers very capable of carrying it out. This coalition of able minds would have been greatly successful, if, more faithful to its device, it had made its banner a rallying point for all the defenders of Catholicism. Unhappily, it was subject to the influence of an exclusive genius, and *le Mémorial Catholique*, becoming the organ of a party, sowed dissension amid the ranks of an army, whose strength is union.

This abortive undertaking is to be resumed. In our mind it is a task of absolute necessity.

If there be, throughout the whole of Europe, a party which labors with great activity, and a species of concert, to precipitate the world into the worst effects of error, there is likewise a general instinct of preservation which disposes minds to revert to the principles of order and security. These principles are none other than those of religion. During the century that society has been considered as the exclusive work of man, all the resources of human power have been vainly put forth in the effort to make States progress. Thousands of clever men have succeeded each other at the helm, and have only appeared there long enough to see *all their wisdom swallowed up*—(Ps. cvi. 27.) Blind pilots, they did not understand that government is to the State, what the helm is to the ship, and that, if the helm serves to steer the course of the vessel, it is only the wind of heaven that can make it advance. They forbade heaven to blow, furled their sails, destroyed the compass, and, turning the helm with all their might, they said—"Onward! how can we progress, if not by the storm? Where are we to land but on the quicksands?"

They sought to govern by the laws, and they have only found that the laws are in the moral order what the lever is in the physical; that they act on the people only by taking their point of rest beyond them. Archimedes, to lift the world, demanded a fulcrum outside the world. More skilful than he, our modern statesmen, would lift the earth, while resting on the earth; they pretended to compel the people in the name of the people; they sought an effect which was its own cause, a force stronger than itself. Their theories were absurd; did it not follow that their acts must be disastrous?

The truth begins now to manifest itself. The rulers of nations, confounded at the sight of their own impotence, seem disposed to call in the assistance of Him who makes the turbulent tribes of earth like a flock of sheep—(Ps. cvi. 41.) In reality, God alone has a voice strong enough, an arm high enough to regulate the tumultuous movements of the nations, and to bring the rulers and the ruled into the path of prosperity, which His finger has worked out for them.

"The religious principle," said a distinguished personage, very lately, "is the only one which raises the masses above their miseries, and the happy above their egotism. . . . What would O'Connell be, if he had not God at his back?"

But there is no religious principle except in Catholicism. Protestantism is nothing more than absolute negation. Far from affording a moral fulcrum to its governments, we see the latter every where occupied in preserving it from total dissolution. Vain efforts! that dead body can but give death to those who are

seeking to restore it to life, if they do not hasten to consign it to the tomb.

Anti-Christian philosophy is also defunct, and it has buried itself under a mountain of blood-stained ruins. If hands inspired by hatred come again to remove some of the stones which cover it, the fœtid stench from within announces total putrefaction. It must be that Voltaire is superannuated, even in the eyes of his own followers, since one of them has thought it expedient to promise us a *new one*.*

The world seems now at a stand, tired of deception, and incredulous as to the word of men. There is now nothing more heard than a multitude of confused voices and undistinguishable sounds. It is, at length, time that Catholicity should uplift her mighty voice, and make herself heard by a world which can only plunge amongst shoals and quicksands, if it be not braced up by religion, and towed onwards by superhuman power.

Men have long enough tried to govern themselves, and to secure happiness, hearkening only unto men—and what men they were! Machiavelli, Bodin, Rousseau, Mably. Is it not time that God should be heard now? But to teach us the secret of making a model government, a perfect legislation, Montesquieu has passed in review before us, in his *Spirit of Law*—(*Esprit des Lois*)—all the plans of governing, all the legislative schemes of the world. He has overlooked but one legislation—that is the evangelical—but one plan, that of the Creator of man and of society. Would it not be well to repair that omission?

If it be established as a dogma in the political world, that God, having made but one man and one woman, and probably never dreaming that men should ever form themselves into great social families, has merely given laws for individuals and for domestic society, so that the family must be religious, while society may be atheist, would it not be good for faith and reason to rectify this dogma?

Because Jesus Christ said that his kingdom is not of this world, and that he referred to the magistrates the decision of a dispute between two brothers—(St. Luke, xii. 14)—does it follow that he has nothing to do with the government of those people who are the work of His hands, the price of His blood? Are the Church and the sacristy His only territory in that universe which He made in sport—(Prov. viii. 30, 31.)—which he will even impeach, and will one day judge without control and without appeal?

Will it be eternally permitted for men, who set themselves up as civilians, and will philosophise on rights before they have learned their definition, to translate the divine right as a silly dream, or an execrable theory, which gives nations up wholly and solely to the excess of an inviolable and sacred despotism, as though the gospel did not assign to the people rights as sacred, as inviolable, as divine, as those of their rulers! As though it did not anathematise despotism, obliging the supreme power to consider itself as *God's minister . . . for good*—(Rom. xii. 4.)—and the dispenser of the law of justice and of love, amongst a vast society of brethren! Would it be a difficult matter to prove that all right, if it borrow not its force from God, is an absurdity, unless it act with the right of the wolf amid the lambs, or of the lion and tiger amongst the inhabitants of the desert?

It might well be that there is a rich treasure of political wisdom in the sacred books, in the Fathers of the Church, in the decrees of the Councils, in the theologians and canonists of the middle ages, and even in those theologians of the *great age*, whose works were burned by the common hangman by order of certain parliaments. It might be that, though Bossuet and Fenelon have extracted so much valuable matter from that treasury, they have not, by any means, exhausted its stores.

The learned author of *Protestantism compared with Catholicity in its effects on modern civilisation*, has fully demonstrated that all that is now claimed by the present political school, as the progress of modern times, is but a recurrence to what was commonly taught and practiced in Europe, under the influence of the Catholic Church, prior to the birth of Protestantism.†

PROTESTANTISM AS IT WAS.

A correspondent of the *Cumberland Presbyterian*, a journal of Illinois, is relating his experience in the columns of that paper. Under the head of "Reminiscences No. 2," he has the following. He shall speak for himself. He seems to be one of a school which is dying out very fast:—

"Bro. Logan—I shall devote some portion of my present number to a brief account of a very singular bodily exercise, called the 'Jerks,' which made its appearance when I was a small boy, in that portion

of Virginia in which I was raised. The phenomena which characterised this strange affair have never been satisfactorily explained, so far as I am advised. Some attributed it to a Satanic influence, some to a sympathetic affection of the nervous system, some regarded it as a disease by visitation of the Almighty, while many were disposed to consider it a religious exercise produced by a divine influence. Whatever our speculations upon the subject may be at this remote period, we think no very satisfactory explanation can be given upon any of the principles of natural science.

The Jerks made their appearance in our country, if I am not mistaken, first in the State of Kentucky, during the prevalence of a great revival of religion, and about the time that Marshall, Stone, and others, went off from orthodoxy into the absurdities of New-iteism and other heretical 'isms, which for many years distracted the Church, and in some branches of which the 'tares' are yet husbanded as the choicest part of the harvest.

Marshall recanted his errors, and returned to the bosom of the Presbyterian Church, from which he had wandered, without, however, being able to bring with him all who had been led astray by his heresy.

Some two or three of the Presbyterian clergy of the valley of Virginia visited Kentucky, in company with several lay members of their congregations, in part for the purpose of satisfying themselves as to the character of the revival, the tidings of which had spread through all the Churches of the older States, and to exert their influence in quelling what was familiarly called 'the Kentucky wildfire.' These ministers were actuated by the best motives, and labored industriously to control the extravagances of their brethren, who they thought were carried by their zeal too far from the established order of the Church. Yet, strange to tell, these ministers from Virginia, who remonstrated so earnestly against such excesses, took the Jerks themselves, as did also their lay brethren, who, upon their return to their several congregations, carried with them the strange malady, which soon spread through the neighboring Churches. The ministers of the Virginia Synod, generally, were strenuously opposed to these bodily exercises, and exerted, both publicly and privately, their influence against such things, as an evil which threatened the peace and order of the Churches. Some of the private Church members, who were its advocates, and regarded it as a demonstration of the power of religion, were greatly offended at the opposition of their pastors, and earnestly entreated them to forbear their opposition, lest they might be found against God.

After the lapse of a few years no vestige of the Jerks was to be found in any of the congregations with which I was acquainted.

The subjects of this bodily exercise generally manifested an aversion to conversation on the subject. All allusion to it, when they were present, were carefully avoided by their acquaintances. What peculiar feelings may have been associated with the recollection of past occurrences that rendered the subject unpleasant to them as a topic of conversation, I know not, and perhaps delicacy may have restrained the inquiry during its prevalence; so that very little in relation to this point, was known when I was familiar with the phenomena of the Jerks. I well remember, however, that those who were afflicted in this way, seemed to dread an attack. Volition had no control over it. A paroxysm generally left them much exhausted, and in rather a melancholy state of mind.

This affection, whatever it might have been, was not confined to any particular class of individuals.—The pious and irreligious, were indiscriminately its subjects, without regard to any particular temperament. Its occurrence was usually under some exciting cause, such as a pathetic discourse, or the melody of sacred music. Very frequently when individuals discovered the approach of a paroxysm, during public worship, they would retire from the assembly, that they might escape observation, or avoid the interruption their presence might occasion. There was great diversity in the character of these exercises: no two persons were affected alike. Some would jerk all over, with the most violent spasmodic action of the muscles. Some would jump up and down until they were perfectly exhausted; they would fall and continue for some time in an apparent state of insensibility. In some instances the head would be thrown backward and forward, in a right line, with a degree of rapidity incredible to those who never witnessed it. Some would be jerked down upon the floor or ground, while standing or sitting, and by the violence of muscular action, beat their heads and heels till they were severely bruised, unless supported by their friends. An old lady who worshipped in the same congregation in which I was raised, occupied a seat near the pulpit, whose exercises engaged my attention on account of their sin-

gularity. She would spring suddenly to her feet, and raising her right arm to a point of elevation which brought the elbow and shoulder in the direction of a right line, and with the fore-arm fixed at a right angle, maintaining this position, she kept up a flirting motion of the hand in a relaxed condition, which exceeded in velocity all my conceptions of physical power. Her head performed at the same time a rotary motion right and left, which seemed nearly equal to that of the hands.

I recollect a man, whose name was Nail, who lived in a distant county, then called the 'backwoods,' was in the habit of visiting annually our neighborhood, in company with some of his associates, about harvest time, to get employment for himself and company as reapers. This Nail was a very profane swearer. He was always made foreman in the harvest field, and whenever he would lead them too fast, or refuse to give them rest, they knew how to control him. They would sing some spiritual song, at which he would commence swearing, and begging them to desist, till at last he would commence jerking. Away would fly his sickle, and down he would fall, and there he would remain jerking as long as they continued the singing. It was not an uncommon thing at that day for wild young men from abroad to visit public places of worship for the avowed purpose of amusing themselves with the feasts of the jerkers, and be seized with it themselves before the assembly dispersed.

It was not an uncommon thing in those days for a company, riding together from church, to sing on their way some of the sweet songs of Zion, and thus cherish the heavenly frame of mind with which they left the sanctuary. Oh! how often has my own youthful voice blended with the songs of Zion's friends, whilst our hearts were overflowing with the good things we had treasured up in the house of the Lord. I have seen a company (good old Presbyterians, too,) so happy and so full of the love of God, on occasions of this kind, that they would halt under the shade of some spreading tree, and sing and praise the Lord until the forest itself seemed hallowed by the presence of the Most High.

A female member of the Church, who is doubtless now in glory, for she lived at Jesus' feet, and in her dying moments had a vision as bright as Stephen's, was often one of our singing cavalcade, and she was a subject of the Jerks. On some of these occasions, she was so violently exercised that it was necessary to remove her from her saddle, and support her to prevent her sustaining any injury.

The cast of piety which characterised the Church in the days of my youth, was something very different from the display of fashionable livery worn by professors of christianity in these days of degeneracy. The congregations of worshippers were then more devotional. When I entered the public sanctuary, I felt that God was there; and the solemn appearance of the assembly indicated that they realised the divine presence. The devotional, grave, benignant look, and dignified appearance of the minister indicated that he was, what he felt himself to be, an ambassador of God, and that his soul was absorbed in the heavenly message he was about to deliver. When I look back to those days, in which professors were 'living epistles, read and known of all men,' I feel that the church is retrograding, and that a large amount of what is now called preaching, when compared with the faithful and heart-searching preaching of former years, is only cleaning the outside of the platter, or white-washing sepulchres. SENEX."

THE GODLESS SCHOOL SYSTEM.

(From the Catholic Instructor.)

We perceive that others beside the Catholics are becoming alarmed at the fearful results of our common school education. In a late number of the *Lawrence (Mass.) Sentinel*, we find a notice of a work recently published in England, under the title of "Notes upon Public Subjects made during a Tour in the United States, and in Canada, by Hugh Seymour Tremenhoe, Esq." Among other things, it seems to have been one object of the writer to establish the proposition that the system of common school education adopted in New England, is prejudicial to the cause of morality and religion. "In order to establish this proposition," says the *Sentinel*, "the writer introduces the testimony of Rev. Theodore, Edson, D. D., Rector of St. Anne's Episcopal Church, in Lowell, from whose letter the traveller publishes the following extract:—

"My experience of now nearly thirty years as a pastor, has, I am sorry to say, forced upon me the painful conviction, that our public school system has undermined already among our population, to a great extent, the doctrines and principles of Christianity. I perceive also its effects distinctly in the modes of thought and action of the young people, who flow into Lowell from the neighboring States,

* M. de Lamartine.

† M. Thiers, *Discours sur la loi relative à l'Enseignement*, 1844. ‡ Balzac, vol. iii. ch. 14.