

The Catholic Record

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LONDON, SATURDAY, JAN. 24, 1925

THE VISION OF THE POPES

The sweep of Newman's historic vision was wide and deep. And he gives us as an outstanding characteristic of the Papacy its detachment from all worldly considerations especially to such considerations as are included in the term, political.

People with no knowledge at all of history are wont to tell us that the whole organization of the Church with the Pope as its head is a huge machine essentially and primarily political, and only secondarily religious.

"Now this 'detachment,'" writes the great Cardinal, "is one of the special ecclesiastical virtues of the Popes. They are of all men most exposed to the temptation of secular connections; and as history tells us, they have been of all men least subject to it. By their very office they are brought across every form of earthly power; for they have a mission to high as well as low, and it is on the high, and not the low, that their maintenance ordinarily depends. Censur ministers to Christ; the frame-work of society, itself a divine ordinance, receives such important aid from the sanction of religion, that it is its interest in turn to uphold religion, and to enrich it with temporal gifts and honors. Ordinarily speaking, then, the Roman Pontiffs owe their exaltation to the secular power, and have a great stake in its stability and prosperity. Under such circumstances any man but they would have a strong tendency to 'conservatism,' and they have been and are, of course, Conservatives in the right sense of that word; that is, they cannot bear anarchy, they think revolution an evil; they pray for the peace of the world and the prosperity of all Christian States, and they effectively support the cause of order and good government. The name of Religion is but another name for law on the one hand, and freedom on the other; and at this very time who are its professed enemies, but Socialists, Red Republicans, Anarchists and Rebels? But a Conservative in the political sense of the word commonly means something else, which the Pope never is, and cannot be. It means a man who is at the top of the tree, and knows it, and means never to come down, whatever it may cost him to keep his place there. It means a man who upholds government and society and the existing state of things,—not because it exists,—not because it is good and desirable, because it is established, because it is a benefit to the population, because it is full of promise for the future,—but rather because he himself is well off in consequence of it, and because to take care of number one is his main political principle. It means a man who defends religion, not for religion's sake, but for the sake of its accidents and externals; and in this sense Conservative the Pope can never be.

Nowadays it is commonplace of platform and pulpit that the working man has human rights that must be respected by employers and protected by the State. That labor is not a commodity whose price is to be regulated like other commodities by the law of supply and demand. That is a truth now quite generally recognized. To the Catholic student of economics or sociology that is one of the most consoling things in modern civilization. For it was the fearless proclamation of this truth by Leo XIII. thirty-four years ago that its present general acceptance is due. It is difficult to realize the stupendous advance. Into a world of telephones, automobiles, submarines, flying-machines and radio a large proportion of the living population has been born. And yet it is not eighteen years since the first heavier-than-air flying machine, that is to say the first flying machine that was not a balloon, was successfully flown. It is hardly twenty-five years since the first submarine successfully stood the test of the American Naval Department. And so on. Many readers are alive who remember the invention of the oldest of them, the telephone. In another order of things: thirty-four years ago there was not a single Labor member in the British House of Commons; and the American Federation of Labor was not yet founded. (True, there was already a somewhat feeble attempt at such an organization in the Knights of Labor.) The working classes of the world groaned under burdens unbearable. Unrest and discontent were rife. But Communism had not yet subverted liberty and social and economic order in a great country like Russia, nor threatened to submerge Europe. Still Communistic Socialism had been proposed as the remedy for the ills of the working classes. Karl Marx's "Capital" had been published twenty-four years previously. However, Communism, Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism were looked upon generally as forms of insanity hardly more or less dangerous than other forms of this disease. That they might prove a menace to Christian civilization was a thought that did not seriously disturb many.

But with that gift of insight into the very nature of social movements, that grasp of principles, that far-sighted vision of consequences, Leo XIII. faced the situation and issued to the world his immortal Encyclical, "On the Condition of the Working Classes." The great Pontiff did not shrink the issue. He realized and admitted that "it is no easy matter to define the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and of the poor, of capital and labor." And this difficult task was enormously enhanced by the fact that the Pope had to speak to all nations and peoples, all races and tongues. He had to lay down principles that were true and would hold good for all places, for all circumstances, and for all times.

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CONVERTS AND CONVERTS

"We hear a good deal about the number of converts to Roman Catholicism from the Anglican Church. It is not so well known that there is a strong drift from Catholicism to Protestantism in some countries of Europe. In England from 1916 to 1921, according to official figures, the number of conversions from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism was 61,755."—The Presbyterian Witness.

The above clipping was sent to us by a reader of the CATHOLIC RECORD who was evidently somewhat irritated by the RECORD's reference to the steady stream of distinguished converts to the Catholic Church in England. The Presbyterian Witness gives us no intimation as to the source of its information nor does it give us a clue to what is meant precisely by "official figures."

The conversions that are noted in the Catholic press are naturally only such as are notable. Conversions are taking place always and everywhere that lack the essential element of news.

As to England, when the son of the Archbishop of Canterbury becomes a Catholic and a priest it is news. Such was the case with the prolific writer and well known lecturer Father Benson who died a few years ago. Ronald Knox was the son of the Anglican Bishop of Manchester. He was converted in 1917 and became a priest two years later. Having made a brilliant university course at Oxford he was already known as a writer while still an Anglican.

G. K. Chesterton was known wherever the English language was read. His conversion to the Catholic Faith was news that could hardly be suppressed. His brother Cecil, in some ways hardly less noted, preceded him into the Church.

Henry Grey Graham was born at Maxton Manse, Roxburghshire, the son of Rev. M. H. Graham, minister of that parish. Henry Graham was himself a Presbyterian minister and Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in his Alma Mater, St. Andrew's University. He is now Auxiliary bishop to the Catholic Archbishop of Edinburgh.

James Britten, F. L. S., was a distinguished botanist and writer; but after his conversion to the Faith devoted his life chiefly to the work of the Catholic Truth Society.

Less than a month ago the English author Wilkison Sherrin was received into the Church.

Sir Philip Gibbs, "the Ambassador from Fleet Street to the Front," and voluminous author, is a convert to the Catholic Faith. So also is Sir Esmé Howard, British Ambassador to the United States. Lady Gibbs, an enthusiastic Catholic worker, is the daughter of a minister.

Professor John Swinnerton Phillimore, son of Admiral Sir Augustus Phillimore, was, even before his conversion, one of Britain's most noted scholars and writers. He was received into the Church in 1905. He is now a Professor in Glasgow University. Like many other converts he is an active Catholic worker. He is a member of The Catholic Education Council.

His brother Captain Valentine Phillimore, C. B. E., D. S. O., R. N., a distinguished naval officer, subsequently joined the Catholic Church.

Sir Bertram Windle is a convert and his coming to Toronto added a scientific scholar of distinction to the great University of Toronto. He is recognized as an authority on comparative anatomy, and has a wide knowledge of the whole field of modern science.

And so we might go on indefinitely. But we desire only to give some idea of the character of English converts.

Newman, a convert, composed "The Dream of Gerontius." Sir Edward Elgar, another convert, set it to music. It was hailed as the greatest oratorio written by an English pen. In 1903 it was heard in the Westminster Cathedral.

Now this was an event of deep significance. Westminster Cathedral is the pre-eminent national expression of religious faith given by Catholics since the Reformation. Its architect, the late John Francis Bentley, was a convert. The author of "The Dream of Gerontius" was a convert; so likewise, was Sir Edward Elgar, the musical composer of the great oratorio and its director on this occasion. Newman had already been gathered to

his fathers; but Newman was alive and middle-aged in the middle of the nineteenth century when England was storm-swept with a very hurricane of bigotry and intolerance at the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy. And that was the occasion of his preaching that wonderful sermon "The Second Spring." The triple triumph of "The Dream of Gerontius," in Westminster Cathedral took place a few years after his death.

Speaking of cathedrals, the architect of the great Anglican Cathedral at Liverpool is a Catholic; though not himself a convert he is the son of a convert.

Cardinal Gasquet has just celebrated his golden jubilee as a priest. He says that the contrast between today and fifty years ago, so far as the position of Catholics in England is concerned, is most striking, incredible were it not self-evident to one who has lived through the last half century.

Addressing the students at the Salesian School, Battersea, Cardinal Bourne congratulated them on the opportunity that would be theirs of witnessing the great Catholic development that is sure to come in the next fifty years.

"You boys will witness extraordinary things in the future. You will take a great part in the future history of the Church in England. Statistics show a marvellous increase in the number of Catholics and will show more.

"Mere statistics do not mean much, yet alone with an increase in numbers there is a steady growth of Catholic influence and in the attention given to Catholic opinion. The future, I venture to prophesy, will see a still greater development."

Cardinal Newman in 1851 spoke of "The Second Spring" because of his great faith. Cardinal Bourne, in 1925, speaks with the knowledge of what has been accomplished in the last seventy-five years; his faith enlightened by that knowledge enables him confidently to predict great Catholic development in England during the next fifty years—without venturing into the realms of pure prophecy.

Our reader who so kindly furnished us with the Presbyterian Witness's "official figures" does not alarm us. Conversions gave us Newman and Manning and hundreds of priests drawn from the Anglican clergy in the last century. The stream is steadily widening and deepening. Converts are coming from all classes and conditions of Englishmen.

On the other hand, there are "expatriates" who fall away; but there are not many Protestants who boast of them. And there are ignorant and vicious laymen who drift into Socialism or infidelity. Others, neither ignorant nor vicious, lose the faith and become, like many so-called Protestants, agnostics or indifferentists. Sir Conan Doyle, a Catholic in his early years, is mired in the superstition of spiritism. Protestants can hardly claim him as a convert even if they cared to do so. There is one other Catholic of note that has fallen away, this one into theosophy or some such vagary. Of conversions of Catholics to Protestantism we know none save such as Dean Swift, contrasting them with those received into the Catholic Church, described as weeds flung over the Pope's garden wall.

WHAT THEY DID TO THE BIBLE

BY THE OBSERVER

There are few Protestants who have any idea of the history of the Bible. A great many of them still imagine that the Bible is a book containing all the truths of Christianity; a book which was suppressed by the Catholic Church for the purpose of keeping the people ignorant of what real Christianity was, while she proceeded to build up a system of moral and mental tyranny which should secure to the Bishop of Rome, whom we call the Pope, and to the hierarchy, whom we call bishops, and the clergy, whom we call priests, an unquestioned control over all the affairs of the world.

This idea was at one time so firmly rooted in the Protestant mind that there never was a dogma of the Catholic Faith more unquestioningly held by Catholics than this dogma was by Protestants. But, as history, in its realities, was all to the contrary of this absurd dogma, and as the theory on which

the dogma proceeded was in itself untenable because it gave credit to the Popes for the possession and the exercise of powers of control never known amongst men, ascribed to the people for a degree of ignorance and of slavish obedience never found amongst mankind in any age, it is not surprising that in later times Protestant scholars have found themselves compelled to reject the theory.

Unfortunately this theory of the history of the Bible lasted long enough to do a most serious ill-work in the world; nor is it yet by any means given up generally; for there are still millions of Protestants who believe that Luther in his young manhood found a copy of the Bible, which he had never seen before, and that, on investigating its contents, he at once saw all the iniquities of the Popish system and proceeded to set humanity free from the machinations of the Scarlet Woman, the Anti-Christ, who had so long enslaved their minds and their souls.

It is not long since a Protestant minister who has a great reputation both in England and in North America, addressing an audience in Eastern Canada, repeated the old fable that Luther found the Bible in the manner aforesaid, and that thus began the freedom of the human mind in matters of religion. There is no doubt whatever that Luther and others of the so-called Reformers did a work of great importance in regard to the Bible. The importance of that work may be judged by the results, seeing that their movement has been the means of finding two hundred religions in the Bible and that there is an excellent prospect of finding two hundred more if the Bible be not altogether given up and set aside before that number is reached.

That is an important work, whatever other term may be applied to it. It is no small matter to make two hundred religions to grow where there was only one before. It is a great accomplishment of its kind.

How did it happen? Today there are many Protestants of education and distinction who are much concerned at seeing the "modernist" attitude towards the Bible. "Modernists" are about ready to reject the inspiration of the Bible altogether. Not only are some of them reluctant to believe that God ever inspired it; but there are those who are not at all sure that there is any God to inspire anything. How did this state of things come about?

We may sometimes hear it said that in Catholic countries there is a good deal of atheism, a good many people who no longer believe in God; and that is true. In the Old Testament we read of many mental and spiritual rebellions against the revealed truths of God. In the life of Christ, as related to us by Saint Matthew, Saint Luke, Saint Mark and Saint John, we read of many rebellions against the teachings of the Saviour. It cannot be, then, that the mere fact of people drifting into unbelief is, itself, proof conclusive that the Church from which they departed is a false one. For, if mere rebellion against a form of religion were proof of the falsity of that religion, there would be proof of the falsity of Christ's teachings, in the refusal, for instance, of the Jews to accept His statement of the Blessed Eucharist. The truth of the Blessed Eucharist is not impugned by the fact that the Jews said it was a hard saying and turned away from Christ rather than believe it. Neither is the prevalence of atheism amongst Protestants, and especially in the teachings of Protestant universities today, proof in itself of the falsity of any of the sects from which those unbelievers have taken their departure. What then is the distinction? Why do Catholics say that Protestantism has brought the world into a moral chaos?

We say so because Protestantism proceeded on a principle which necessarily, when carried to its logical consequences, led to unbelief. When Catholics become unbelievers, they do so in utter defiance of the main Catholic principle which is that there are limits to the freedom of human thought and that Christ left on earth in His Church the power of judging and fixing those limits. When Protestants become unbelievers they do so in pursuance of the main Protestant principle which is that there is no limit to the right to think as one pleases.