

The Catholic Record

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London, Saturday, Sept. 8, 1894.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

On the 8th of the present month, September, the Church celebrates the festival of the Nativity of Mary the Mother of God.

It is common in the world for persons to celebrate their birthday, and friends unite in congratulating them when this anniversary occurs; but in the estimation of the Church of God the true natal day of the saints and especially of the martyrs is not the day when they came into this earthly life of trials and miseries, but the day of their entry into eternal life, the day when they exchanged the afflictions of earth for a heavenly crown, and reaped the reward of their labors in the service of God. Thus an illustrious and pious writer said:

"Those days are justly to be called natal days, on which those who had been born to the miseries of earthly frailty, are in a moment born again to glory, receiving at the instant of death the beginning of a life which has no end. If we call that day our natal day on which we were born into this world in sin and sorrow, more justly is that birthday celebrated on which the saints lay aside their corruptible body to enter into the new brightness of a future life, wherein from being the sons of men, they are adopted to be the children of God."

The day of a blessed Martyr's or Confessor's death is, therefore, by ecclesiastical usage called in the offices of the Church his natal day, and it is that day which is generally observed in the Church as the saint's feast day.

In the case of Our Lord, the feast of His nativity is one of the two principal festivals celebrated in His honor, because His nativity is His first act on earth towards our Redemption; and when He was born an angel announced to the shepherds of Judea: "Fear not: for beloved I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord in the city of David."

In the two instances of the ever Blessed Virgin Mother of Our Lord, and His precursor, St. John the Baptist, there is also an exception to the general rule, the nativities of these two being observed as festivals. The day of their death is celebrated also, however, for the same reason which holds good in the case of other saints.

The reason for the departure from the usual practice in the case of St. John the Baptist is found in the fact that this great saint is believed to have been sanctified before birth on the occasion when the Blessed Virgin, before giving birth to Our Divine Saviour, visited her cousin, St. Elizabeth, and saluted her, the infant St. John was sanctified, as we learn from holy Scripture that even at that moment he manifested that he felt the influence of the Divine Presence.

Notwithstanding that Calvin maintained that the exultation of St. John on this occasion was a merely natural phenomenon, it has been the belief of all the Fathers that it was supernatural, and the effect of divine grace. Origen says: "He felt that his Lord had come to sanctify his servant before his birth, and at that moment Jesus made him His precursor and prophet." It was in view of this office which he was foreordained to fulfill, that an angel of God was sent to his father Zachary to announce to him: "Thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity." (St. Luke, i, 14.)

The birth of St. John the Baptist was therefore exceptional, for though not conceived immaculate, he was sanctified in his birth, and in view of this there is special reason for rejoicing on the day of his nativity. In the case of the Blessed Virgin the reason is much stronger, for she was immaculate from the first moment of her conception, being preserved by the efficacy of Redemption, from all stain of original sin. This fact makes the reply of Elizabeth to her salutation especially significant, when the

latter said to her "Blessed art thou among women." This is one of the forms of the Hebrew superlative, and signified "most blessed among women." The angel Gabriel also when announcing to her that she would become the Mother of the Son of God, saluted her as "Full of grace" and "Blessed among women." From before her nativity she was therefore marked out as the Mother of God, and we may most appropriately rejoice on the recurrence of this anniversary, because she is born for so high a purpose as to become the Mother of the Redeemer of mankind.

Gerson and other learned authors relate that it was revealed to a certain hermit that there was joy in heaven on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and that on his making this known to the Pope then ruling the Church, the latter saw the propriety of instituting the festival so that the faithful on earth might participate in the same happiness. The feast was certainly instituted at a very early date, for a mass of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin is found in an ancient Sacramentary which is believed to have been completed by St. Leo the Great, who began his pontificate in the year 440. In the Sacramentary of St. Gregory the Great, there are also prayers and a solemn procession prescribed for this feast, and a special Mass called the Mass of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. This Sacramentary dates from near the close of the sixth century. The feast was not always kept on the day of its present observance, but the present date must have been universally kept from a very early period, since it is observed by the Greeks as well as by the Western Church. It must, therefore, have been observed universally, long before the Greek schism occurred in the ninth century; otherwise it could never have received universal acceptance to the very day of celebration.

The place of the Blessed Virgin's nativity is not certain. The Holy Scripture is silent regarding it, and Tradition is not so clear as to decide the question. Baronius thinks that her birthplace was Nazareth, where she was visited by the Angel Gabriel when announcing to her that she should become the Mother of the Son of the Most High. St. John of Damascus, however, asserts that she was born in Jerusalem. Her parents were Sts. Joachim and Anne, whose feast days are kept respectively on the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption, and on the 26th of July.

It is not to be supposed that these dates are intended to fix the dates of the death of these two saints, for the Traditions on this subject are too uncertain that any special days should be exactly fixed upon regarding it; but the Church desires to commemorate the immortal triumph of these two saints whose connection with Our Lord was so intimate, and has therefore wisely appointed these two days for the purpose.

St. John of Damascus in one of his sermons on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin thus unites the praises of Mary, Joachim and Anna:

"Inasmuch as it was to occur that the Virgin Mother of God should be born of Anna . . . equally happy are Joachim and Anna, and to you every creature is under obligation, for through you, all creatures offer to the Creator the most excellent of gifts, a chaste mother, who alone is worthy of the Creator."

These are the reasons why all should unite on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, in paying due honor to the ever Blessed and Immaculate Mother of God.

SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC.

At a time like the present when an audacious party is doing its best to create dissension between Ontario and Quebec, it is a good work to endeavor to place before the people of this portion of the Dominion reliable information as to the real state of affairs existing in the sister province, and we are confident that when such information shall be properly afforded, much of the ill-will which has been excited through the exaggerations of interested parties will disappear. We are, therefore, pleased to see that our enterprising contemporary, the Toronto Globe, is at present engaged in securing trustworthy intelligence on this subject, having sent a special correspondent to visit Quebec thoroughly in order to find out by personal observation the relations existing between the Catholic and Protestant populations there.

We believe that Mr. John A. Ewan, the correspondent selected, is very fairly suitable for the purpose indicated. Being a Protestant, he will, of course, look at matters from a Protest-

ant standpoint, and we may be pretty sure he will not be without his prejudices; but we think that he will, at least, endeavor to be fair in giving his impressions on the matters he has undertaken to observe and inspect.

We are far from supposing that he will find all things in Quebec just what they ought to be.

He will, no doubt, find here and there prejudices against Ontario, just as in Ontario there are prejudices against Quebec. He may even find ill-will in some quarters; for it must be remembered that humanity is pretty much the same everywhere, though passions are modified, being either magnified or moderated by education and the various circumstances which from time to time occur and which have an irritating or a contrary influence. Yet we venture to say that Mr. Joly's testimony will be found correct, which was given on the occasion of his visit to Toronto last February to the effect that,

"The religion of the Protestant minority is not interfered with and never has been. The minority, in fact, does not scruple to find fault with the religion of the majority, and, pitying that majority, would like to relieve French-Canadians from many abuses the weight of which they themselves do not feel."

Mr. Ewan seems to have already discovered that the Protestants of Quebec are suffering in the matter of education. In his letter, which appears in the Globe of August 24, he states that he found in a village which he calls Richelieu, "a little private school which a few Protestant children attend. This school owes its origin to an Ontario woman who has a niece living in the village. The niece has some children of school age, and her aunt, being unwilling that they should attend the Roman Catholic school, contributes a sufficient sum of money to keep this school in operation. The school being there, the few other Protestant children in the neighborhood also attend. There are not enough of them to establish a dissentient school under the terms of the law, and the parents, therefore, still pay taxes for schools which their children do not attend."

On the facts as he states them he makes this commentary:

"The school question in mixed communities everywhere has proved a difficult one to deal with, and whatever may be said in these letters in reference to it will be said with a perfect knowledge that the effort to strike a balance between diverse interests has been a puzzle to educational legislators in Canada as well as elsewhere. It is well, however, to point out to our fellow-countrymen in Quebec, that when they claim that their concessions to the minority in their Province are parallel or identical with those granted the minority in Ontario, they are evidently unaware of the facts. It is true that in both Provinces, where the minority is numerically strong enough, they can organize a school of their own. But how is it when they are not sufficiently numerous? The Ontario schools were undoubtedly considerably affected by this phase of affairs, and I think rightly so." But as to Quebec he thinks the state of affairs calls for different treatment. He says:

"The National school in Quebec, which some Protestant children have to attend, or go without schooling, is, in many cases, a school where instruction in the Roman Catholic religion is the cardinal business of the teacher, and where the teaching is conducted in French."

Mr. Ewan admits that the Protestant scholars are not obliged to pay attention when religious exercises are going on, but he points out that it is an injustice to Protestant children to be obliged to attend the schools at all where the inculcation of Catholic tenets holds so large a place in the curriculum, just as Catholics would object if the situation were reversed.

We are prepared to admit that Mr. Ewan has no intention to exaggerate, yet we must say that we believe he actually exaggerates on the present occasion, and the cause is probably the very thing which he states to be the case with those who maintain that the concessions to the Protestant minority in Quebec are identical with those granted to Catholics in Ontario: He is "unaware of the facts."

One evidence of this is that he does not seem to be aware even of the name of the village he visited. There is no post office list, though there is a county of Richelieu, of which we have no doubt Mr. Ewan speaks. Let us therefore examine a little into the circumstances of that county.

The census for 1891 tells us that there are in that county, 21,169 Catholics, and 182 Protestants. Of these lat-

ter, 137 reside in the city of Sorel, leaving 45 scattered through the rest of the county. Mr. Ewan is speaking of a village, and he therefore does not mean Sorel. Now, outside of Sorel, the municipality which contains the largest number of Protestants is St. Robert, where there are twenty six Protestants, men, women and children. Of these eleven belong to the Church of England and fifteen seem to be unattached to any particular denomination, as they are returned under the general name of Protestants.

According to the ratio in Ontario, there would be not more than seven Protestants between the ages of five and twenty-one years: and this number would probably be the utmost limit of those attending any one school in that neighborhood. More probably the number would not exceed four or five, and the number of ratepayers might be about the same. At all events Mr. Ewan admits that there were not ratepayers enough to start a Dissentient school under the law. If there were there would certainly not be enough to sustain it, by the ordinary taxation.

Now the Globe's correspondent apparently wishes us to believe that under similar circumstances in Ontario the Catholics would have a flourishing school revelling in Government aid! Nothing can be further from the truth.

The fact is that Protestants in Quebec, especially through the townships, are much more scarce than Catholics in Ontario. The whole number of Protestants, Jews and non-Catholics of every description, in Quebec is only 196,666, while the number of Catholics in Ontario is 358,300—or nearly double the number; and in Ontario there were just 289 Catholic Separate schools, the only Catholic schools receiving a small Government grant; while in Quebec there were 976 Protestant elementary and Model schools, and academies, 1 Protestant Normal school, and 6 Protestant colleges receiving Government aid.

Indeed, Mr. Ewan makes a serious mistake when he says that the (Separate) school systems of Quebec and Ontario are proclaimed by Catholics to be "parallel or identical." We are quite well aware that this is far from being the case. In Quebec, equally with Ontario, the Protestant schools have the lion's share of the advantages. The Catholics of Quebec have no desire to take from them any of these advantages; but, on the contrary, they are willing, and they have always been willing, to correct any disabilities which at any time have been shown to operate against the Protestant schools; while in Ontario, it is only by making a constant and determined fight for parental liberty that Catholics retain the still imperfect system of Separate schools which has been established.

It is no answer at all to this to say, as Mr. Ewan does virtually, that almost the whole time in Catholic schools is devoted to the teaching of Catholic doctrine. Catholic doctrine is certainly taught in them, to the Catholic children; but it would be most unreasonable to expect that for the few Protestant children who live in Richelieu and many other counties the whole Catholic system of education should be overturned. It is as much as any reasonable Protestant could expect, that no Protestant child is asked, much less compelled, to receive Catholic instruction.

We may further remark that the Protestants outside of the cities in Quebec are very few in number; but where they are at all numerous they have their schools with a full share of Government aid. It is surely not necessary to give further proof of this than to state the single fact that out of 9,267 teachers, 1,271 are Protestants. As the Protestant population is thirteen and one-fifth per cent. of the total, the Protestants have actually 48 teachers more in the Government-aided schools than they would be entitled to if they received only fair play. Beside this is to be remembered which Mr. Joly stated in his Toronto speech: "As to the educational rights of the minority, he desired to point out that Sir John Rose in the debate of 1865 on Confederation had shown that the right of separate education was accorded to the Protestants of Quebec before the union, when they were in a minority, and entirely in the hands of the French-Canadian majority."

How different was the case in Ontario!

To show further the different conditions which exist in Quebec and Ontario we should add here that in only three constituencies of Ontario are there fewer Catholics than 500, viz., South Norfolk, West Durham, and West Bruce; whereas there are 29 in Quebec where the Protestants fall short of that

number, ranging from 1 in Lislet to 474 in Levis.

RITUALISM AND SACERDOTALISM.

The Rev. W. J. Knox-Little, Canon of Worcester, has written a work entitled "Sacerdotalism," being a reply to recent attacks made by Archdeacon Farrar upon the Ritualistic party of the Church of England, and which were published in the Contemporary Review. This work of the Canon is interesting from the fact that it is regarded as a Ritualistic manifesto, setting forth the claims and objects of the High Church party, and it creates no small surprise among the so styled Evangelical party, inasmuch as it maintains with a good show of reason that Ritualistic doctrines and practices are justified by the declaration of Church of England standards and authorities.

Archdeacon Farrar's attack was made upon the Ritualistic teaching concerning the Eucharist, Confession, Priestly Absolution, the Priestly Office, Apostolic Succession, and other subjects.

The real truth of the matter which makes it possible for each of the two parties to maintain that its views are the real views of the Church, is the undeniable fact which is set forth by the late Lord Macaulay in his history of England, that the standards of the Church are a compromise, the purpose of which is to embrace as many as possible of the population of the country within its fold, however contradictory might be their tenets. This being so, the standards were purposely left indefinite.

When these standards were framed, Calvinists or out-and-out Presbyterians in belief, were, indeed, numerous, but there were also many who clung with tenacity to the doctrines to which Luther adhered to the day of his death; and these regarded themselves as Protestants of as good a type as those who adhered to Calvin's five points: for Luther, and not Calvin, was the father of the Reformation.

There is an idea among the adherents of the Low Church party, that to be a true Protestant, it is necessary to deny the Real Presence; but these apparently forget that Luther maintained the doctrine of the Real Presence during his whole life, with such vehemence that he declared that he would make it the basis of his claim to salvation that he had sustained this doctrine, against Calvin, Zwinglius, and the other Sacramentarians; for he said that there is nothing more clearly contained in holy Scripture than that Christ gave His real flesh and blood to be received by His followers. He further stated that among all the early Christian Fathers, not one had under any circumstances stated that the Eucharist is merely a figure of Christ's body.

On this subject he has the following in his "Defence of the Words of the Last Supper."

"That no one among the Fathers, numerous as they are, should have spoken of the Eucharist as these men do, is truly astonishing. Not one of them speaks thus: 'There is only bread and wine,' or 'the body and blood of Christ are not present'; and when we reflect how often the subject is treated and repeated by them, it ceases to be credible: it is not even possible that not so much as once such words as these should have dropped from some of them. Surely it was of moment that men should not be drawn into error. Still they all speak with the greatest precision, evincing that they entertained no doubt of the presence of the body and blood! Had not this been their conviction, can it be imagined that among so many the negative opinion should not have been uttered on a single occasion? On other points this was not the case. But our Sacramentarians, on the other hand, can proclaim only the negative or contrary opinion. These men, then, to say all in one word, have drawn their notions neither from the Scriptures nor from the Fathers."

In the face of this irrefragable argument of the father of Protestantism, it requires no little audacity to assert, as Archdeacon Farrar does, that the Ritualists un-Protestantize the Church by teaching the same doctrine. It is not the doctrine of Transubstantiation, as believed by Catholics, that the Ritualists hold, but the Lutheran doctrine of Consubstantiation, and the Test Oath, which was framed expressly against Catholics, and which was required before the year 1829, to be taken by all who desired to exercise civil rights, carefully avoided striking at this Lutheran doctrine, as the persons sworn were only obliged to abjure "Transubstantiation as taught by the Church of Rome."

Canon Knox-Little has shown by most convincing evidence that on the

question of the Real Presence, and indeed on all the points touched upon by the Archdeacon, the early Church was in accord with the Ritualists; and as a matter of course it follows that the early Church was identical with the Catholic Church of the present day, from which the Ritualists have adopted their peculiar views. So true is this that the British Weekly, commenting upon the Canon's work, though unfriendly to the cause of the Ritualists, admits that, "The Canon reveals in the citations of the fathers, familiar enough to scholars, which show how early the sacerdotal view established itself in the Church. They simply show that the judaizing party, against whose views of Christianity and religion Paul protested with his whole soul, gained the upper hand after his death, and that it required a later and better instructed age to understand Christ's charter of spiritual liberty."

This is a curious admission. It gives up entirely the pretences which are so universally circulated and believed among Protestants, that the Catholic doctrines which they set aside in the sixteenth century are innovations of a modern date. They are now acknowledged to have been taught by the Fathers with one accord, but we are coolly told that it required a later and better-instructed age to understand the real teaching of the Holy Scripture on these points.

When it is borne in mind that some of the Fathers in question received the faith from the Apostles themselves, as in the case of Ignatius, and others were in the next generation, it is preposterous to say that it required a generation sixteen or seventeen centuries later to interpret the meaning of what the Apostles taught. The assertion is a poor compliment to the Church, which is called by one Apostle, "the pillar and ground of truth," and which Christ Himself declared He built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

What the Church believed universally in the second, third and fourth centuries could be nothing else than what was taught and established by the Apostles themselves.

But Canon Knox-Little goes even further than this. He maintains not only that the doctrines assailed by the doughty Archdeacon are the doctrines of the early Christian Church, but that they are the actual doctrines of the Church of England. So well has he succeeded in showing this that the British Weekly admits that when Archdeacon Farrar "endeavors to show that his reasonable faith is synonymous with the Anglican system, he delivers himself into the hands of his sacerdotal opponent. . . . When he (Canon Knox-Little) has shown that the system he advocates may fairly claim to be considered the real Anglicanism, he is a very long way indeed from proving it to be in accord either with primitive Christianity or with common sense."

Thus we find that it is conceded that Low Churchism is the innovation upon Anglican Protestantism, instead of the cause being the other way, as the Low Churchmen have been so fond of maintaining.

There is another point on which the British Weekly is evidently groping in the dark. In writing the above it overlooks the fact that it concedes that the Canon has proved that Primitive Christianity condemns the stand taken by Archdeacon Farrar, and teaches just what the Catholic Church of to day holds. It is rather inconsistent to insinuate now that Primitive Christianity is something different from this. It is a proof that the writer of the comments was in a state of great perplexity in his endeavors to prove Catholic doctrines a novelty.

The Christian Cynosure, a Methodist paper published in Chicago, is opposed strongly to secret societies as being inimical to Christ and Christianity, and in a recent article it pokes fun at the Moslem Branch of the Freemasons which recently held a convention at Denver. The Cynosure does not want Moslemism in America. It savors too much of Turkish barbarism. It says: The Moslem branch of Freemasonry met last week in Denver. So large a number of "imperial" officers were elected that there is a decided flavor of Chinese Confucianism about it all. One religious system is as good as another for men who worship the gods of the Mystic Shrine. Mr. Lucre of this city (Chicago) was chosen "Imperial Potentate," and A. B. McGuffey of Denver "Imperial High Priest and Prophet." Let such prophets be warned by the fate of Balaam and of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah.