

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS.

IF we consider how great an influence religion has in politics we cannot but come to the conclusion that a change in religion must needs be accompanied by a change in government. The coming of Christianity was no doubt the greatest change ever operated in religion, and therefore it must have operated a similar great change in politics. It is this which we will try to determine. Ancient society was founded on the old religion, the principal dogma of which was that each god protected his special family or city and existed for nothing else but that family or that city. From this same religion proceeded all the laws; the laws concerning men in their relations with one another, the laws of property and inheritance, in fact the laws of all proceedings, and this not according to the precepts of Justice but in view of promoting the interests of religion. Again this same creed became a government; it dictated the duties for the kings, the governors and heads of each family. All came from religion, that is, from the opinion man had formed of "Divinity." Religion, law and government were all the same thing under three different aspects.

We see that in this ancient social system religion reigned supreme in private as well as in public life. The state was a religious community, the king a pontiff, the magistrate a priest, and the law a holy maxim. There patriotism was piety, exile an excommunication, and individual liberty was unknown. Man was a slave to the state by his soul, body and riches; moreover, hatred for strangers was an obligation, the notions of law, duty, justice and affection were limited to the city, and human associations were necessarily bound within a certain circumference about the shrine of some god. Such were the conditions of Grecian and Roman laws in the earlier part of their history. Gradually, however, society bettered itself, changes were accomplished in creeds, and consequently in laws and government. Already during the five centuries preceding Christianity, religion, politics and law were becoming more and more distinct. The efforts made by the oppressed classes, and the work of philosophers and the great progress of the human mind, finally did away with the old principles of human association. The people could no longer believe in their old religion, and this fact answers the question why laws and politics became eventually detached from the creed.