

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY.

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN ACADEMIC HALL ON MARCH 29TH., 1889, BY
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VEN before that solemn and sublime, "In the beginning," whereby openeth the story of Genesis, God reigned, alone in Himself—self-sufficient in His Infinite Perfection and enjoying in His immense unbroken repose, as Lammenais hath it, a limitless happiness. No creature had as yet troubled the silence or disturbed the solitude of the deep.

But behold on the day appointed in His eternal purposes, obedient to that great law which proclaims that *all good tends to expand and diffuse itself*. "Jehovah," as the French poet expresses it, "bounds forth from the depths of eternity. Sleeping chaos awakes in His presence to be quickened by His virtue while His Omnipotence reposes on immensity." Thus the universe came into being, with its harmonious variety of creatures, animate and inanimate—all subject to man, but having God for their first and final cause, and the universe of which Pascal has said that its centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere, reflected that majestic unity which shines forth in its Creator. Hence did man—as a rational creature—having contemplated its harmony call it by excellence *Order* or *Beauty*. * In the Middle Ages, just as Europe began to breathe freely after the irruption of the Northern hordes, she naturally turned her thoughts to her own condition, which she found to be truly chaotic, as well from the political and social, as from the scientific standpoint. The echoes of the great schools of Athens reached her ear only in broken and feeble accents. The voices of the Origenes and of the Clements of Alexandria, heard by but few even in the happiest days were completely overwhelmed by the din of arms, and gave a little incomplete enlightenment fallen from the lips of some unknown scholar, treasured up by the pupils of the monastic establishments; the rays

of learning's sun were few and weak—giving neither joy, nor life to an indifferent world.

Then it was that the Church founded universities, even as God had created the Universe. Grouping into one harmonious whole all the truths left by the ancients and preserved by her monks, she purified them from the stains inflicted by contact with the sensuality of paganism, and superadded all those natural truths which Revelation supposes or implies. Taking, then, this body of knowledge, this scientific universe which she had called forth from chaos, she raised it to God the Redeemer, whence applying it to human society she made it the force and the prop of Christian peoples. The spirit of Christianity which had built those worlds called Gothic Cathedrals, and inspired the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas, raised up Catholic Universities. The very mention of Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Cologne, recalls glorious stages in the Catholic science's conquest of the world. It had, ladies and gentlemen, been for me a task at once easy and agreeable to sketch the history of the famous Catholic Universities, and to find shelter beneath the shadows of their past and present greatness for the last born of these foundations. Those whom our smallness alarms might thus find ground for hopes for our future—remembering that where God giveth life and vigor little things grow to greatness and from greatness achieve renown. Never has the benediction of a Pope fallen in vain upon any institution; never have the favors of a church prelate been fruitlessly spent, and unheard of is it, that a work watered by tears of sacrifice has failed even in ungrateful soil to take deep and healthy root. The tree that rests most solidly on the bosom of the earth is always that which has risen in the midst of tempests. Well, then, may we have confidence.

A much more serious subject, however, must this evening fix our attention. Let us begin by a reply to the question so often asked in Ottawa, during the last few

* Κοσμος.