

CONSIDERATIONS OF CATHOLICISM BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

Sacred Heart Review—CCXC.

Our friend Ibanez tells us that before the Reformation the common people had no sense of human dignity, no sense of their rights, duties, or responsibilities.

This is a very extraordinary statement. How could such things be? From every pulpit, every altar, every confessional, every catechism, the people were continually instructed that Man is created to the image of God, and appointed to an eternal participation of the Divine perfections and blessedness; that he, by his own fault, has lapsed from this exalted destiny; that God, in His infinite compassion, has restored him to it by the sacrifice of His own Son; that He offers us the unbounded gifts and sanctifying impulses of His Spirit, that is, of Himself, to abide in our hearts continually, and to exalt us, if we will, to sit down with the Redeemer on His throne, as He, having overcome, has sat down on the throne of the Father. We are there, as St. Peter assures us, by the adoption of grace, to become eternally "partakers of the divine nature." What can go beyond this for maintaining the sense of human dignity, and for absorbing the sycophancies of "life's poor distinctions?"

On what do Protestants chiefly rest for maintaining the sense of human dignity among their people? On the reading of the Bible, and on the diffusion of scriptural knowledge from the pulpit. Of the former there can not have been much in the ages of costly manuscripts, and when as yet the rude vernaculars were regarded as almost profane; but of the latter, there was abundance. As an English evangelical remarks, though far from friendly to Catholicism, the medieval sermons decidedly surpass the usual sermons of today in simplicity and Scriptural fullness.

The Catholic Church esteems the Sacraments as the chief means of grace. But the Sacraments are the same for all, from the Emperor to the beggar. There are no royal sacraments. The greatest monarch and the humblest artisan receive the same Eucharist and the same absolution. Any priest who can absolve a peasant can absolve a king. In a Catholic country no sovereign would think shame of himself if, meeting the Viaticum on its way to the poorest home, he should dismount and accompany it to the door or to the bedside of the dying person. In a country where Catholic reverence for the sacraments has laid hold of everyone, how can there fail to be a profound sense of essential equality, however many marks of evil distinction there may be, and however much, for civil ends, these may be insisted on? The Lutheran ordinance of the sixteenth century, that in time of plague the clergy should only carry the Communion to the rich, struck every Catholic heart with horror, and seems to have been one great reason why multitudes began to return to the elder Church.

Of the populations which are noted for their intense Catholicity, foremost, in common esteem, stands the Spanish peasantry. Now this is distinguished, among all the peasantries of Europe, for its high sense of personal dignity. It is only the Spanish beggar who, soliciting charity, and being admonished as idle, would answer: "Senor I asked your alms, not your advice." It is not the New England boy, as Charles Kingsley foolishly imagines (I wish it were) but the Castilian innkeeper, who says, with hardly a sense of bravado: "I am as good a gentleman as the king; only not so rich." The height of Catholicity and the height of personal dignity are found together. No one can read Don Quixote and not be struck with the tone of cheerful friendliness pervading all ranks. Abating some of the highest dignities, "Brother" seems to be a term freely used by any one towards any one, saving, of course "Father" to a priest.

No one will accuse Froude of a disposition to embellish Catholicism, but Froude, speaking of the Spanish peasantry, their dignity, their courtesy, their friendliness,

and their sense of justice, and their cheerful piety, asks what more we need wish for them. We may call the Spanish peasant an obscure artist, but as Froude intimates, an obscurantism that bears such fruits can hardly be a very undesirable thing. Goldwin Smith, too, is no lover of the Ancient Church; but he hopes that Spain may yet be regenerated by her virtuous peasantry.

Of course some of those men who "compass sea and land to make one proselyte" will easily, among all the millions of Spain, reckon up any number of vicious peasants and will then jeeringly triumph over us that we have spoken of the virtuous peasantry of Spain. With such people we need not encumber ourselves. When we say that a country has a virtuous and pious peasantry, we mean that virtue and piety are generally revered, are deeply influential and shape multitudes of lives. Few persons speak warmly of the Spanish upper classes, which have been deeply tainted with Voltairianism for more than a hundred years, although I do not believe but that there are among them many, very many, virtuous and pious men and women. We do not believe that the memory of St. Ignatius has yet become impotent, or of St. Teresa, St. Francis Borgia, and their holy helpers, nor the memory of the illustrious Spanish episcopate of the olden days, although probably there are multitudes who have not a notion that Spain ever had a prelate above the level of the archbishop who patronized and dismissed Gil Blas.

It certainly can not be said that our abundance of New England Puritanism has developed among us a high sense of personal dignity. We have our share of virtues, I hope, but certainly that is not conspicuous among them. It may not be a chief virtue, but it is deeply interfused with the virtues that are chief. It blends with the Saviour's beneficent friendliness to give a double glory to the Son of Man.

No doubt the Spaniards will be much the better for more schooling, especially technical schooling, to put them more on a level with the nations which are so endowed, and also to overcome that unhappy dislike of the mechanic arts which was brought about by their centuries of warfare with the Moors. But as concerns the development of character, the Spanish people do not seem to have been in any acute distress for the lack of Protestantism, although the 'Spectator' suggests of another people, it is well for Christians to learn to keep the mind on a level with the heart. Emotion may doubtless sometimes overbalance thought, in the land of St. Teresa, that

"Fair sister of the Seraphim," but the Spaniards, whose land has been famous for theologians as for saints, will probably think that they can do very well without overpassing the resources of the Peninsula.

By the way, during the Spanish war, while we and the Dons were both making faces at each other a little more than was befitting, our Free Baptist friends of the "Morning Star," although the intensest of Protestants, maintained a steady protest against our policy towards Spain, and emphasized the whole qualities of the Spanish character, and the evidence given in the excellence of the modern Spanish literature that this character is not degenerating. I could wish that I were Charles V. of Spain for a little while. I would certainly decorate our friend Bickford with the Golden Fleece. He well deserves it.

One may answer for all. We have gone to the very centre of intense, nay of fanatical Catholicism, and have found it also a centre of the sense of human dignity, national and personal. And in the ages before the Reformation we find this sense of dignity stronger than now, rather than weaker.

We have found therefore, that the charge that the people have no sense of human dignity until the burly peasant Luther arose to overwhelm them with floods of vituperation, and to express a wish that they might all be bought and sold "like other asses and hogs," is a charge worthy of the vulgar proselytizing sheet in which it ap-

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OBEYS POPE'S INSTRUCTION.

The distinction of being the first Catholic church in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, as well as one of the very first in the United States, to follow to the letter the recent instruction issued by Pope Pius X., for the regulation of church choirs and sacred music, belongs to the Boy's choir of Holy Trinity Church Georgetown, the oldest Catholic Church in the district of Columbia. The Church is under the pastoral care of the Jesuit Fathers, Father J. F. X. Mulvaney, rector.

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of the supreme interest taken by the Pontiff in the preservation and restoration of ecclesiastical music.
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