

HON. W. BOURKE COCKRAN

In the Hope of Christian Education—His Speech at Notre Dame.

The following is Mr. Cockran's reply to the address of Father Morrissey, President of the University of Notre Dame, on occasion of the presentation of the Lacture Medal, New York, May 14th.

Most Rev. Archbishop, Right Rev. Bishops, Rev. Clergy, Gentlemen—To be selected for special commendation by a Catholic institution of learning is the highest honor that can be achieved by a Catholic layman.

It is not for me to undertake a definition of a Catholic's spiritual duty. That is not a subject of human speculation, but a matter of divine revelation. While matters of belief are not to be debated on platforms but must be expounded from Catholic pulpits whence no error ever has been or ever can be preached, it is permissible and fitting for laymen to inquire what lessons of civic patriotism are conveyed by Catholic faith.

I have always believed, and I have never hesitated to say, nor to repeat at every opportunity, that in my judgment the Christian revelation is the very fountain and origin of republican powers. It is capable of sufficient virtue to excite them for his own protection without perverting them to the oppression of his neighbor—except in that Christian doctrine which teaches the perfectibility of man through the saving influence of divine grace.

liberal in matters of faith they can be liberal in their attitude to those who differ with them. The Church can not compromise with error, nor tolerate it; but for those who reject the truth as she expounds it she has nothing but charity and prayers.

The history of civil institutions for nineteen centuries is the record of a gradual but constant assumption by the State of enterprises originally assumed by the Church as works of religion. The relief of the sick and the care of the needy, which the Church assumed in rude ages when the man who was unable to bear arms sank beneath the trudge of human sympathy, and was abandoned to die on the roadside in misery and suffering, the State now acknowledges as an obligation of civil society; and everywhere the support of hospitals and almshouses is imposed on the community through the power of taxation.

Why should not every citizen, Catholic or Protestant, Christian or pagan, commend and approve every force that operates to preserve and confirm Catholic doctrine? What influence can Catholicism exercise that does not make for order, for law, for progress, and for propriety? There is not a service denominated from the citizen by the State as a matter of civic duty which the Church does not enjoin upon him as a matter of conscience.

think we may say with perfect safety that every commandment of the Church is an incentive to patriotism; every one of her prohibitions is a precaution against disorder and crime.

In the Gospel read during the mass on the Sunday before last it is recorded that our divine Savior conversing with His Apostles said that there were many kingdoms which he had yet to tell them, but which they were not then able to bear them.

In the light of the fruits which Christianity has borne we may measure, though faintly, the fruits which it may yet produce. If the moral law was universally observed, can anyone doubt that government would be relieved from any necessity of exercising its punitive or coercive power, and that it would become merely a powerful device to promote the co-operation of man, to reinforce industry by facilitating means of transportation, to modify the harshest decrees of nature by providing for the relief of sickness and of misery?

I do not believe the wildest dream of improvement that we can indulge is extravagant in the light of the progress which man has already achieved. But however that may be, that much at least is true, the number of those who yield obedience to law only through coercion is steadily diminishing, while the number of those who joyfully support it is every day increasing.

of religion and the bulwark of citizenship. It is with a sense of the most profound satisfaction and gratitude that I accept this honor from a great Catholic University, and that I interpret it as enrolling me among the number of those who by contributing in some way to the defence of Catholic faith are strengthening the foundations of this government and helping to make this Republic a mighty engine for the regeneration and uplifting of the human race.

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