

RELIGION IS THE ONLY SOLID BASIS OF SOCIETY.

BY CARDINAL GIBBONS.

Religion is the bond that unites man with his Creator. It is a virtue by which due honor and worship are paid to God. It embraces all those fundamental truths that involve God's sovereignty over us and our entire dependence on Him. I employ the term religion here in its broadest and most comprehensive sense, as embodying the existence of God; His infinite power and knowledge; His providence over us; the recognition of a divine law; the moral freedom and responsibility of man; the distinction between good and evil; the duty of rendering our homage to God; and justice and charity to our neighbor; and, finally, the existence of a future state of rewards and punishments.

I hold that religion is the only solid basis of society. If the social edifice rests not on this eternal and immutable foundation it will soon crumble to pieces. It would be vain to endeavor to establish a society without religion as to erect a palace in the air or on shifting sands, or to hope to reap a crop from seed scattered on the ocean's surface. Religion is to society what cement is to the building; it makes all parts compact and coherent. "He who destroys religion," says Plato, "overthrows the foundations of human society."

The social body is composed of individuals who have constant relation with one another; and the very life and preservation of society demand that the members of the community discharge toward one another various and complex duties.

What does society require of your rulers and magistrates? What does it require of you? It demands of your rulers that they dispense justice with an even hand. It demands of you that you be loyal to your country, zealous in her defense, faithful in the observance of her laws, conscientious in the payment of imposts and taxes for her maintenance and support. It demands that you be scrupulous in observing your oaths and vows, just in the fulfillment of your contracts and obligations, honest in your dealings and truthful in your promises. It demands that you honor and respect your lawful superiors, that you be courteous toward your equals, condescending to your inferiors, faithful to your friends, magnanimous to your enemies and merciful to the poor and oppressed. It demands of the married couple conjugal fidelity, of parents provident vigilance, of children filial love. In a word, it demands that you "render to all men their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom honor;" and that you "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

MUST BE A MOTIVE FOR THESE THINGS. How can these social virtues be practiced without sufficient motives? These motives must be strong and powerful because you have passions and self-interest to overcome. They must be universal, because they are binding on all members of society. They must be permanent because they apply to all times and all places.

What motives, religion apart, are forcible enough to compel legislators, rulers and magistrates to be equitable and impartial in their decisions? What guarantee have we that they will not be biased by prejudice and self-interest? Will a thirst for glory and a desire for public approbation prove a sufficient incentive for them to do right? How often has not this love of glory and esteem impelled them to trample on the rights and liberties of the many, in order to win the approbation of a few sycophants, just as Rehoboam opposed his subjects that he might be admired and praised by his young courtiers, and as Alexander enslaved nations to receive the applause of the fickle Athenians.

Would you vote for a presidential candidate that avowed atheistic principles; I am sure you would not. You would instinctively mistrust him; for an unbelieving president would ignore the eternal laws of justice, and the eternal laws of justice are the basis of civil legislation.

What principles without religion are binding enough to exact of you that obedience which you owe to society and to the laws of your country? Is it the dread of evil punishment? But the civil power takes cognizance only of overt acts. It has no jurisdiction over the heart, which is the seat of rebellion, the secret council chamber where dark schemes are concocted. The civil power cannot enter the soul and quell the tumults raging there. It cannot invade the domestic circle to dispel the intemperance and lawlessness that enervate and debauch both mind and body. It cannot suppress these base calamities, whispered in the dark, which poison the social atmosphere with their foul breath, and breed hatred, resentment and death. You might as well expect to preserve a tree from decay by hewing off a few withered branches, while allowing the worms to gnaw at the roots, as to preserve the social tree from moral corruption by preventing some external crimes while leaving the heart to be worm-eaten by vice.

Besides, if you are so disposed, can you not, in many instances, escape the meshes of the law by resorting to gifts, bribes and ingenious frauds? How feeble LAW WITHOUT RELIGION. If the civil sword, even with the aid of religion, can scarcely restrain public disorders, how futile would be the attempt to do so without the co-operation of moral and religious influences?

Still less do you fear the judgment that posterity may pronounce on your conduct. For if you believe neither in God nor in a life to come, the condemnation after ages will not disquiet you, the censures of future generations will not disturb your ashes in the tomb. Nor can you suppose the emoluments of office an adequate incentive to induce you to be an upright and law-abiding member of society. The emoluments of office are reserved for the privileged few; the great bulk of society will always be consigned to private life.

Do not imagine, because you happen to be a man of irreproachable private life, integrity of character and incorruptible justice, that your fellow-citizens will seek you out, as the Roman sought Cincinnatus, at the plow, that they will embrace you, force you from your cherished seclusion and bestow upon you some office of trust and distinction. "The office should seek the man, not the man the office," is a beautiful but Utopian maxim—a maxim so antiquated as to deserve a place in the cabinet of national curiosities. The most successful office-holder usually has been and usually will be the most industrious office-seeker; and his chances of success are not always improved by a delicate sense of honor and an inflexible adhesion to principle.

The esteem of your fellowmen will not be a sufficient inducement to make you a virtuous citizen; for the great mass of virtues, even of those virtues that influence the well-being of society, are practiced in private and are hidden from the eyes of men, like the root which gives life and bloom to the tree, or the gentle dew of heaven which silently sheds its blessings on the labors of the husbandman.

EVIL UPRIGHTNESS CAUSES ENEMIES. Nor should you be vain of your good actions, instead of winning the applause of your fellow-citizens, will sometimes even draw upon you their suspicion, their jealousy, their odium and their calumny. The wisdom and integrity of Aristides were such that the Athenians surnamed him "The Just;" yet they condemned him to exile. On the day on which the people were to vote upon the question of his banishment an illiterate burgher, who did not know him personally requested him to write the name of Aristides upon his ballot. "Has that man done you any injury?" asked Aristides. "No," answered the other, "nor do I even know him. But I am tired of hearing him everywhere called 'The Just'."

The case of the Founder of the Christian religion is still more familiar to the reader. Who was so great a benefactor to society as He? He went about doing good to all men. He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and, walking to the lame and strength to the afflicted, and even life to the dead. He promulgated the most sublime and beneficent laws that were ever given to man; He invariably inculcated respect for ruling powers and obedience to their authority; and yet He was branded as a seditious man, an enemy of Caesar, and He was put to death by the very people whom He had sought to deliver from spiritual bondage.

But perhaps you will say that a natural sense of justice, independently of religion, can exercise sufficient influence in inducing you to practice the duties of an upright citizen. But to disregard religion and yet profess to believe in natural justice is self-contradictory. It is grasping at the shadow and rejecting the substance. It is unconsciously clothing one's self in the garment of religion, while respecting its spirit, "having indeed an appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof." If you seriously reflect, you will discover that natural justice has no foundation unless it rests on religion. Natural justice may sound well in theory, but it is feeble barrier against the encroachments of vice.

JUSTICE VS. PERSONAL INTERESTS. Tell me what becomes of your natural love of justice, or what influence does it exert on your conduct, when it stands in the way of your personal interests, pleasures and ambition?

It is swept away like a mud bank before the torrent, because it has not the strong wall of religion to support it. Would your love of justice lead you to give a righteous decision against your friend and in favor of a stranger, though you were persuaded that such a decision would convert your friend into a lifelong enemy? Would it prompt you to disgorge ill-gotten wealth, and thus to fall in a single day from affluence into poverty? Would you natural sense of duty inspire you to with patience and resignation if you were defrauded of your property by the treachery of a friend? Would a mere natural sense of duty or propriety restrain a Joseph or a Susanna from defiling his or her conscience and violating the sacred laws of marriage? Would a natural love of truth and honor compel a guilty man to avow his secret crime, that he might vindicate the innocent falsely accused? Such acts of justice, patience and truth are not uncommon in the Christian dispensation; but they would have been deemed prodigies of virtue in Pagan times.

There are many that consider mental culture a panacea for every moral disorder. "Let knowledge," they say, "be diffused over the land. Social order and morality will follow in its track." The experience of other nations, as well as that of our own, shows it to be a very great illusion to suppose that intellectual development is sufficient of itself to make us virtuous men, or that the moral status of a people is to be estimated by the widespread diffusion of purely secular knowledge.

When the Roman Empire had reached the highest degree of mental culture it was sunk in the lowest depths of vice, and corruption. The Persian Empire, according to the testimony of Plato, perished on account of the vicious education of its princes. While their minds were filled with knowledge they were guided by no religious influences. The voice of conscience was drowned amid the more eager and captivating cries of passion, and they grew up monsters of lust, rapine, and oppression, governed by no law save the instincts of their brutal nature.

Jesus is always ready to perfect in you whatever He sees imperfect or defective; confidence is the key to His Sacred Heart.—Ven. Louis Blossis.

Let us lay our hearts at the feet of the Infant Jesus Whom the Wise Men sought for in holy faith, and found by the guiding of a star, and having found, fell down and worshipped, offering Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

BY THE RIGHT REV. JOHN J. GLENNON, D. D.

There is no kinder word in our language than "home," nor a sweeter creation of our civilization than what it stands for. What memories it conjures up! what undefined longings it creates; what untold good it has done! Now, the home as we understand it is essentially the product of our Christian faith. The Greeks and Romans of old, though representing classic civilization and literature of a high order, had no definite idea of the home. They had no word to express it; they had no principles on which to base it. For these principles we must go to our Christian faith, which taught first the sanctity and stability of the marriage bond, making thereby husband and wife "one and indivisible." This permanency of the marriage bond gives to married life a stability which is reflected in their home. Add to this the second principle of parental responsibility for the children their union may be blessed with, and, corresponding with this responsibility on the part of the parents, arises the child's obligation to reverence and obey his parents. These two principles are absolutely necessary if the home is to be an enduring reality.

But even these two principles, however basic they may be, are not sufficient to create and perpetuate the home as the happy and the holy place we have come to regard it. Love is necessary, as well as law; obedience, even with divine sanction, must, to be really helpful, spring from the heart as well as the head. Now this last principle, duty toward the other, is also the product of our Christian religion, which in elevating woman to be the associate and coequal of man, has given to wife and mother a place of paramount importance in the home's upbuilding. She is to be henceforward the very center of its being, the bond of unity, the alea through which are fused its constituent elements. Hence, it is no figure of speech to say that the home is built around the mother's heart.

You are then the home-builders and the home-defenders. If you were to say that the man should build the home, it might be true if houses were houses. Let the men build the houses; but houses are not homes. The true home is not so much a thing of brick and mortar as of hearts consecrated in a common affection and a common duty. It is where love counts and duty urges, and we look to the mother as the most fitting symbol of both.

But why, you may ask, should the Catholic priest urge so vigorously the duty of defending and protecting the home? Is it that he, being himself homeless, finds in the pain of loss the inspiration, just as John Howard Payne, an exile from home, sang with infinite pathos the beauty of "Home, Sweet Home"?

To which I would answer, no such sentimental motives inspire him. He teaches the duty of home because it stands an integral part of our civilization—nay, its very foundation, as it is also its last development. Our smaller republics we call homes. Our public virtues are put the exploitation of our home virtues. As our homes, so will be our nation; and if the homes be destroyed and domestic virtue disregarded, our national life and our present civilization are inevitably doomed. Hence, to defend the home is not only Christian; it is also a patriotic duty.

To-day the home is attacked on every side. The divorce court, laxity of morals, the restlessness of the people, the commercialism of the age—all conspire to destroy the home. Many have come to regard home life as unutterably dreary. They want to go to the theatres, clubs, hotels, offices—anywhere but home. City life is to-day the life of the homeless, and country life has come to be regarded as a failure. Young people, especially, are so attracted to the tinsel and glare of the world outside that they willingly exchange for it the peace and protection of their homes. They go where there is noise and excitement and false light, and they leave behind the sun-kissed home, where their childhood years were spent in love and benediction. Soon find out that the great world that stands in front of them is too much for them. They who went forth to conquer sometimes return to die, sometimes die without returning.

The social salvation of our young people is closely linked with their love of home and with their having home to love—homes luxurious, if you will, but more certainly virtuous. Such homes we expect you to build and rule by your love and goodness. See that all that you are, all that you hope to be, will blossom forth in your home, making them for you and yours the happier places in all the world.—St. Teresa's Quarterly.

HE NEVER GOT THE ORDERS.

A young man whose parents were Catholics has given up all religious practices. He says no prayers. He never goes to church. He does not give his soul a thought, but lives to enjoy himself as he pleases.

Last Sunday an acquaintance of his, who had just come in from Mass, said to him jocularly: "What will you say to the good Lord when you die and are up for judgement when He asks you why you did not obey His orders to go to church?" "I'll say," he replied, "that I never received His orders."

How terrible a reply he did for his parents, if it were true! If they did not give him a religious training, if they did not tell him about God and instruct him in his duty to his Creator, if they did not accustom him from childhood to say his morning and night prayers, to abstain from meat on Fridays, to assist at Mass on Sundays, to go to Confession once a month, etc., etc., the plea of their son at the bar of Divine Justice may tend to save him but to condemn them.

without contrition for it, what hope is there that they have escaped eternal damnation?—Catholic Columbian.

INFIDELITY THE PARENT OF SUICIDE.

If one may judge of the progress of infidelity from the terrible increase of the crime of suicide, unbelief is making sad havoc of the souls of many. The days have gone when the controversies between those inside the Church and those outside were conversant with what were supposed to be mere matters of detail, and proceeded upon the common acceptance of certain general principles which were called "Christian," as distinguished from "Catholic," on the one hand, and "Protestant" on the other.

On all sides it seems to be admitted, by those whose intellectual processes give weight to their words, that the Catholic Church is, on the one hand, the real and the only Church of Christianity; and on the other, that it is the only Church that can offer any effectual opposition to the unchristian development of "modern thought." Professor Huxley cannot be suspected of any undue bias in favor of the Catholic Church, and yet even he speaks in this manner: "Our great antagonist (I speak as a man of science), the Roman Catholic Church—the one great spiritual organization which is able to resist, and must, as a matter of life and death, resist, the progress of science and modern civilization, manages her affairs much better."

The Catholic Church, then, is the recognized exponent of whatever real Christianity exists in the world; and when as is represented as the deadly antagonist of what Professor Huxley is pleased to call "science and modern civilization," the representation is true, so far as "science and modern civilization" (as pursued and cultivated by a certain class, however large or influential, still only a class), are based on "Naturalism."

That the controversy between faith and unbelief takes issue on this broad thesis—that details that often served merely to obscure larger issues have been eliminated—that all the logical acumen and intellectual power that was really formidable have taken themselves to this last stronghold—all this we regard as highly favorable to the interests of truth, and consequently to the Catholic Church. However straggling parties may sustain desultory conflicts in various parts of the great field of controversy, the main array has marched off—not without sounding beat of drum and shrill blare of trumpet—and entrenched itself in what it deems an impregnable fortress; and on the banner that waves above its battlements is emblazoned the name of—Naturalism. And Naturalism is but modern paganism. The Catholic Church alone can stop the tide of infidelity and save the world from the evils which it washes on the shores of humanity.—American Herald.

THE CHURCH'S OPPOSITION TO SENSATIONALISM.

In his "In Memoriam" Tennyson calls attention in a striking manner to the mutability of things the ordinary man regards as typifying permanency itself. It will be remembered that, after referring to the changes the earth has seen, he illustrates these changes in the well known lines where he speaks of the hills flowing from farm to farm and fading like mist, and of "the solid lands" that shape themselves "like clouds and go." Not only does the material environment of man change, but his mental attitude also constantly undergoes transformation. Questions which at one time stirred his being to its very centre become to him as "tedious in a twice-told tale."

The man of thirty, as he moves over the file of an anti-slavery organ published before the civil war, can feel nothing of the hot indignation that stirred his father as he read articles which his son now peruses with languid indifference. The same son, however, if he has not abandoned the faith of his fathers, will read the Bible with the same interest his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather had in reading it. Why?

Cardinal Gibbons answered this question in the course of a sermon on "The Word of God" he delivered last Sunday in Baltimore. The sermon was an indirect rebuke to the sensationalism that has taken possession of so many Protestant pulpits. There was a time when all Protestant ministers took their texts from the Bible. To-day many of them take it from the newspapers, evidently believing that the great truths that have come down to us through the ages as a precious heritage fall upon their congregations. The Catholic priest who would undertake to copy after those sensational preachers would be called to account in short order by his ecclesiastical superiors, who would remind him that the Catholic Church has received from her Divine Founder not a mission to please men by tickling their fancy, but a mission to impart to them the eternal verities of which she has been made the guardian.

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Those verities, as Cardinal Gibbons pointed out in his sermon, are of enduring importance and cannot be affected by the lapse of time. His Eminence brought this fact to his hearers by reminding them that "the Gospel of Jesus Christ," to quote his own words, "surpasses all human orations, because God Himself is its author, Peter and Paul address you, James and John address you; but they speak to you not in their own name, but in the name of Christ."

Compared with the message Peter, Paul, James and John have to deliver to us, how insignificant the grandest oration ever delivered by the greatest orator the world has seen. Cardinal Gibbons presents this thought in these eloquent words: "The speeches of Demosthenes, of Cicero, of the Earl of Chatham, of Patrick Henry, treat of subjects of a transitory and ephemeral character. They possess only an academic interest, and are read chiefly, if not exclusively, for this style. Who cares now about the disputes between Demosthenes and Philip? Who is concerned about the indictment of Cicero against Cataline and Verres? Who is influenced by the speeches of the Earl of Chatham in the British Parliament? Many of his countrymen to-day would dissent from the views which were then applauded. Even the orations of Patrick Henry, which fired the colonies, excite little or no emotion to-day."

Fifteen or twenty years ago, if a public speaker had extolled the wisdom and statesmanship of our splendid isolation and our freedom from entangling alliances with foreign nations, and had denounced imperialism, his sentiments would have been universally applauded. If he were to speak to-day on the same lines, he would be regarded by many as verging toward political heresy."

After calling attention to the transitory interest men take in things merely human, the Cardinal contrasts the interest generated by God's truths. He says: "But the words of Christ have a permanent and abiding interest throughout the world. They are as true and as convincing now as they were one thousand years ago, and will be as convincing as they are to-day. Kings and empires may fall, dynasties may change, science may startle the world by its discoveries, but the Word of the Lord abideth forever. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; 'Thou shalt not kill; 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; 'Thou shalt not calumniate; 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods; these precepts shall exert their sway as long as man shall inhabit this earth."

It is no wonder, then, that the Catholic Church does not tolerate the sensationalism which has taken possession of so many Protestant pulpits. Her opposition is due to her intense appreciation of the need there is of her children hearing and obeying the divine injunctions, on the observance of which depends the eternal welfare of mankind.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

Tested by Logic.

From the Catholic Telegraph. The application of logic to the private judgment idea invariably shows it untenable. A few evenings ago Father Brannan, the famous Southern missionary, lectured to a mixed audience at Louisville, Ky., and, in the course of his remarks, suddenly declared:

"I want to give you this syllogism: 'Any principle opposing the design of God cannot be from God.' 'Private interpretation of the Scripture opposes unity of faith, which is the declared design of God.' 'Therefore private interpretation of the Scripture cannot be from God.' This is graphic, terse, conclusive. The intelligence that cannot grasp it must be either invincibly prejudiced or invincibly ignorant."

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