

become of a people who thus plunged at once into the vices which ordinarily attend excess of luxury.

Burke had a profound confidence in moral forces in the determination of the destinies of nations. He had a strong and simple faith in the Divine disposition of earthly powers, and no feature of the new fanaticism shocked him more than its blasphemous defiance of Heaven and its wretched wallowing in paganism. The persecution of religion, the violation of sanctuaries, the setting up of the goddess of liberty, the saying of the encyclopædist Diderot that "submission to kings and belief in God would soon be at an end all over the world," were for Burke the most despicable features of all. He placed in contrast to all this the frame of the English Constitution, "made under the auspices and confirmed by the sanction of religion and piety."

Another consideration upon which he laid great stress was the evil consequences necessarily following the abandonment of all established order. He was deeply impressed with the sacredness of the ancient order of things, and practiced a deep piety towards the constitution. He had grave misgivings of sudden changes, and an absolute aversion to abstract reasoning applied to political questions. He felt that civil institutions could not safely be tested by pure reason. "You were not used to do so from the beginning,—these are the arguments for states and kingdoms," said he: "metaphysical deductions have their place in the schools." In his opinion there were no great discoveries to be made in morality nor in the great principles of government, and he sums up the whole conservative argument for us in these forcible words: "We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason, because we suspect that the stock of each man is small and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages." Nothing was more ridiculous or more shameful in his eyes than that these "alchemists and projectors" of the revolutionary idea should

pretend to be legislating for the elevation of humanity, when they were plunging society into such a mire of corruption, and sacrificing the first aims of all society to the experiment of their wild fancies. "People will never look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors."

In his "Letter to a Noble Lord" and "Letters on a Regicide Peace," he continues his attack. In the latter of these he urges war against France as a public nuisance and a menace to the good order of neighboring governments. In France the foundation of government was laid in regicide, in jacobinism, and in atheism, and he maintained that "the influence of such a France is equal to a war, its example more wasting than a hostile irruption."

These are but some of the trunk lines on which Burke's extensive influence worked. We have not followed out their minute ramifications, nor have we spoken of other momentous affairs, such as the freedom of the public press and the Catholic emancipation in Ireland, whose present more amicable disposition is due to him. The subject is enormous and but imperfectly touched upon in this paper. To obtain an adequate idea of the results of his political wisdom one must needs study the texture of all present constitutional government. To obtain a correct idea of his influence on the British Constitution, study the amelioration of English domestic government and of British rule abroad; notice the difference in its tenor in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century; observe its advance in equity and common justice; compare these with the high handed arrogance and Cæsaræan tendencies of the king and Parliament that oppressed Ireland, lost America, wrecked India, and all but drove the people of England into the unnatural vengeance of a French Revolution, and you have, in outline at least, the wholesome influence of Edmund Burke on the British Constitution.

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