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LECTURE OF THE MOST REVEREND ARCHBISHOP HUGHES.

We are indebted to the *Baltimore American* for the following report of a lecture on the "Condition of the Church in the United States," delivered by His Grace the Archbishop of New York, at Baltimore on the 17th ult.; and which was listened to with profound attention by a numerous audience made up of the most distinguished citizens of Baltimore. His Grace introduced his subject by remarking:—

There is no subject which has elicited such varied and contradictory speculations as an attempt to understand the present condition of the Catholic Church of the United States. Members of that Church, and members of other denominations, have indulged in speculations with regard to its members, the sources from which they are derived, and its power of endurance amid the novel circumstances in which it finds itself in this free country. (Applause.) And the circumstances are indeed novel; because from the beginning of Christianity until the declaration of American independence that Church has never found herself face to face with the civil government of any country except as its favorite or as its foe.

The Pagan emperors of Rome, as you know, opposed it with persecution unto death. When Constantine became a Christian he favored it, and his successors pretended to favor it with their earthly patronage, until his descendants degenerated into petty disputants of the theological questions, and prepared the way for the incoming of those who became the masters of the fallen empire. They, in their turn, necessarily, because they were ignorant, though brave, fell under the instruction of Christianity; and, in forming the germ of the present governments and nations of Europe, in their social capacity, the Church herself was brought in as part and portion of the governments thus interested, and they as civil rulers from the beginning professed to protect her.

In later times, when changes of religion came, whilst she was petted in Catholic countries; she was persecuted in Protestant countries; and thus up to the present time, for the period to which I have referred, she has never found herself face to face with the country and in rivalry with creeds, in which no favor was to be shown on one side or the other. And hence it is that this new problem has furnished a theme for the inquiry of philosophers of every religion on both sides of the Atlantic ocean. And when I had the honor of being invited to deliver a lecture for the benefit of young men who devote their energies to protect their still younger brethren who may be exposed to forfeit both their faith and morals unless protected, surrounded as they are by so many dangers and temptations, I thought that no subject, though a most difficult one it is, would be more in keeping with the spirit of their purpose than in endeavoring to elucidate the question to which I have referred, namely; the condition and prospects of the Catholic Religion in the United States. (Applause.)

By some it has been supposed that the Catholic Church was making almost incredible progress in the absence of all restraints and discouragements placed upon her by the Legislatures of the States, and that her course was onward and prosperous. By others it has been assumed that the action of the institutions of this country was so powerful upon the Catholic mind that the Church not only made no progress, but that she was actually retrograding, and in this confusion of ideas I could see but one way in attempting—and it will only be an attempt, for the matter is surrounded with difficulties—to elucidate what I may think now to be the actual condition of the Catholic religion here and what are its prospects. In the first place, the Catholics who are here now are derived from three sources. One is, the primitive stock of the Maryland colony; the second, is immigration; and the third is an element, which has hardly yet been brought into the account, but which I think deserves to be considered an element in elucidating this matter—that of the conversion of persons of other religions. (Applause.)

These are the three and only sources, and in endeavoring to follow out my ideas, it will be necessary for me, in order to use the shortest words, to repeat frequently, the terms Catholic and Protestant. I beg you to understand that in this reference, I waive all theological and polemical questions, and I consider for the present, and for my purpose, these two religions as simply rival demonstrations in a noble competition as to which shall render to God the most glory, and to man the greatest benefits. (Applause.) If, therefore, one syllable escapes me calculated to offend any one of this audience, I beg it to be understood, that I retract such an expression by anticipation, even before it is uttered. It would be unbecoming in me to avail myself of an occasion like the present, when I am honored by the presence of many who are not of the Catholic religion, to say one word, which could give offence to any one in the least.

For my purpose, it is necessary for me to take within my view, a period of seventy years; that is to say, a period between the Declaration of Independence and the formation of the Constitution. The year for that period will be the years 1785, in which the Very Rev. Father John Carroll, the representative of Maryland, a Jesuit Priest, was appointed by the Holy See, and invested with spiritual authority as the Superior of the clergy in this country. Until that time, such authority came through the Vicar Apostolic of London, and at that period he was appointed, and here is a proper starting point for us to determine this question, because, although there remained for long years enactments upon many of the statute books of different States, discouraging Catholics, I shall not take them into the account, but shall consider that from 1785 until 1856, the Catholics of the United States have stood upon a perfect equality as to the law with their Protestant fellow-citizens.

Now we must begin by asking who and where were the Catholics in 1785? Archbishop Carroll speaks of them, and finds that in Maryland there were between sixteen and twenty thousand. In Pennsylvania there were about eight thousand, according to the best accounts. A Priest was appointed for New York in that year by Father Carroll, and he reports that he found a congregation of two hundred there. Except the Catholics of Maryland, those of Pennsylvania and other States, with rare exceptions, were all foreigners. Nevertheless, in those trying days, when Carroll himself had taken such a patriotic part in vindicating the rights of his country, and when the Catholics of Maryland were redeemed from all former prejudices, not only by their own candor, but by the great and illustrious name of Carroll and his connection with the work, it so happened at the same time that in Pennsylvania of the eight thousand Catholics there, there were three conspicuous, trusted and honored in the great work of preparing the country for the result which has been so gloriously attained. One of these was Moylan, the First Quarter-Master-General of the American army; the second of these was Fitz Simons, a member of Congress; and the third was Commodore John Barry, the founder of the American navy.

All these were Catholics, and, considering the paucity in numbers of the general body, were at least quite conspicuous and well qualified to confer honor upon it, and remove any prejudices existing against it. Now to the Catholics of Maryland, there have been accessions made ever since that period, and you will find that, although the colony of Maryland had been founded by Catholics, and although the first declaration of religious liberty, or the strongest approach to it, was there enunciated, nevertheless, from the revolution of 1688, they were disfranchised, and for the period of seventy years made no progress. Immigration was not permitted, and severe laws were enacted against them and Governor Sharp, in 1758, himself a Protestant, computed them at that time as one in thirteen, in the population of the colonies. Immediately after the American revolution, however, and perhaps before, some of these had gone to Kentucky, and there they introduced Catholicity. But except the three sources to which I have referred, you may look over the expanse of the whole United States and no history mentions the existence at that period of any community of Catholics in any part thereof. Individuals, and perhaps solitary families of the Catholic faith, might have been found here and there, but these are the three sources from which, as I will call them, the native, hereditary and American Catholics are to be derived.

How was it in respect to other things? There were at that time few Catholic churches in the whole of the United States. One was at Philadelphia, one was at Goshen-hoppen, one was at Conewaga, and I believe one at Baltimore was about finished, and that was Saint Peter's church. Besides this, there was no public Catholic church in the State of Maryland. There were no Catholic schools or colleges to prepare young men for the ministry, or in fact, Catholic schools or colleges of any kind. There were no Catholic hospitals or orphan asylums or any institutions of this character. There were only Father Carroll and twenty-four priests; three of whom were incapacitated by age from doing duty. The glorious missions of the French Jesuits among the Indians in the Eastern States, at the North and along the rivers of the West, though limited to a certain extent, had passed away and form nothing in the account we are now considering. The accessions of territory, which have since taken place are not to be counted in this original, hereditary Catholic population. Louisiana came in by purchase eighteen years after the period I speak of, and her population, though born on the soil, was small. Florida, which was brought into the Union, or at least acquired as territory afterwards, and though it had belonged to a

Catholic government, had a population scarcely worth mentioning. Since that time, the acquisition of Texas from another Catholic government has been made, but its population also was sparse, and yet still farther, the acquisition of California, which had gold, but few inhabitants has been made. And lastly, New Mexico has been acquired, but all these acquisitions have been of countries with immense territory, but comprising within their limits in point of numbers an insignificant, original Catholic population. So far, thereof, we give an account of the condition of the Catholic church at the beginning of the period of seventy years, which in our circumstances has been the first and most distinguishing period of light, civil liberty and universal equality before the law. (Applause.)

Whence now, it may be asked, has been the increase in the present members of the Catholic people? The increase has been from immigration, and I think upon that subject very erroneous ideas prevail, both among Catholics and Protestants. I think that immigration has been vastly overrated, and from an examination of the best authorities within my reach, both official and scientific on the English and American side, I have every reason to believe that immigration into this country has been much smaller than has been generally supposed, though necessarily large. It has not been possible for me to procure correct and accurate accounts of the immigration into this country, except from the British empire, but we can easily understand and conjecture what it would be from the continent of Europe.

In the first place, we know in regard to this immigration, that there is no distinction made, in the authorities upon this subject excepting in one or two instances, between the inhabitants of one country and those of another, so that the immigration from the British Empire has been described and considered in general terms, and we know farther that so far as Catholicity is concerned, neither Wales nor England, nor Scotland, which contributed much in the earlier stages of immigration to the population of the United States, furnished any addition to the Catholic body. It remained, therefore, for Ireland, as a part of the British Empire, to furnish Catholic immigrants, and you will, perhaps, be surprised, when I mention that up to the year 1825 the immigration from the British Empire counts but little over 300,000. The statistics from which I derive my information appear to be exceedingly accurate, much more so than those which have been presented by the later authorities in this country.

In the first place, after the establishment of peace, there was very little good-will between the two countries; but, on the other hand, there was a remnant of rancor still remaining upon the one side, and self-congratulation upon the other. The immigration which began, or at least which was first noted, was in 1794, when it was 10,000. It goes on diminishing until the close of the war, but for four or five years previous to that time, the immigration was so slight that it is scarcely to be taken into the account. From the close of the war it increased, but still in a moderate degree, up to the year 1825, when it was found to have been a little more than 300,000.

I may mention further, that during this period the greater portion of immigrants from Ireland were not Catholics but Protestants; that is to say, they were Presbyterians from the North of Ireland, who settled some in New Jersey, and in greater numbers in Western Pennsylvania. Many of their descendants are now found in Western Virginia, in Tennessee, and in Ohio. From that class of people, therefore, the great majority of immigrants came at that period; nor does the tide of Catholic immigration appear to have set in toward this country with any great force until after the close of the Revolutionary war. It would be tedious and tiresome to go through the dry details of statistics, and repeat how many came in this or that year. However, it is enough for me to say that the immigration from Great Britain and Ireland, which up to 1825 was a little over 300,000, reached in the following twenty-five years 1,453,325, and since that period from 1850 to 1856 there have arrived at the city of New York alone 1,319,236 immigrants. During this period nine-tenths of the immigrants to this country landed in New York, and there is no account of those landing elsewhere. The statistics we have then upon this subject would authorize this conclusion, that the immigration from Great Britain and Ireland since 1790 until the present year has amounted to about 3,250,000.

Now, if we are called upon to determine to which religious party these immigrants belonged—this matter enters not into the account of the statistics of immigration—although for the last fifteen years perhaps four-fifths of the Irish immigrants were Catholics, still taking the whole period of time, the proportion would be much greater upon the other side—the Protestant side. From the continent of Europe, from Sweden, Norway, and most of the German

principalities and states, nearly all the immigrants were Protestants. There were very few Spanish and French immigrants.

The object of these remarks is first to impress upon you a just conception of the amount of immigration, and how far it has contributed to the actual results of the Catholic religion, as it now exists in this country, and secondly, to meet the objection which has been urged on both the Catholic and Protestant side to the effect that Catholicity wastes away under the full light and liberty of the United States. It is not long since a nobleman in the House of Parliament proclaimed on the authority of a letter written by a Priest of Ireland, who was opposed to immigration, that the only way to convert the Irish would be to remove from them the pretence that they were persecuted by the State, and to make them equal before the law by sending them to America, and then indeed in a short time they would renounce their religion and become like other sensible men. (Laughter.)

The result of the immigration here I think will satisfy you, that though this has been the case to a lamentable degree, it does not in the least prove, that the Catholic religion is not fit and competent to hold her own, no matter how great the light and liberty may be. It is true, that hundreds of thousands of the descendants of the Catholic immigrants have fallen away from their religion. It is equally true, that they have hardly added any thing to any other denomination of Christians. It is true, that they have fallen simply into a state of indifference, and alas, sometimes into a state of infidelity.

This is not, because they have examined their religion in the light of the age, or in the presence of equality. Not at all. Calamities of one kind, and another, the death or ignorance of their parents it may be, or their remote situation from the opportunities of practicing and learning their religion, accounts sufficiently for the falling away of those, who are acknowledged to have been lost to the Catholic Church. Again, though the number of immigrants into this country alone might be equal to the whole number of the present population, still the slightest inspection will satisfy you as to the fallacy of the reasoning of those who misjudge this question and will convince you that the immigration pouring into the country is like water cast into a vessel that is leaky, and that it will not retain any quantity it receives.—According to the laws recognised in statistics, the very common laws of mortality, immigrants to this country are dying at the rate of one in three, and this is because they are especially exposed to the accidents of life, to sickness, hardship of every kind and toil-some poverty. They are especially exposed to epidemics, whether in the form of the cholera, yellow fever, or any thing else which decimates them and therefore the common allowance of mortality is not sufficient to express the proportion of the deaths in their case.

Now, therefore, if it be true that the action of this age of light and of freedom is detrimental to the progress, or the existence of the Catholic religion in the presence of other free denominations, how are we to account for the progress of the Catholic religion actually made, according to the statistics published in this city, in the Catholic Almanac? It must be that the original Catholic population of Maryland, and their descendants, have kept the faith and propagated it to a great extent, or, besides the living immigrants, a vast number have been preserved, and have not fallen away, but inherited the faith of their foreign-born ancestors, and are perpetuating it.—(Applause.)

But the other element to which I have referred is conversion; and although I am quite satisfied that the number of converts does not equal one-third of the descendants of Catholics who have passed away from the faith, nevertheless, I consider it a great element, essential for explanation of the condition of the Catholic Church at this time.

We find, by the census of 1850, that there were then in the United States nineteen millions five hundred and fifty-three thousand and sixty-five white inhabitants, of whom two millions two hundred and forty thousand five hundred and thirty-five were of foreign birth. Now, those of foreign birth were made up of all the nations I have mentioned; and the only two nations which contributed in any considerable degree to the augmentation of Catholics were Ireland and Germany; and in that year, 1850, the Irish, according to the census, numbered nine hundred and fifty thousand in the whole United States. Of this a very considerable portion were Protestants; and of the remainder, according to the laws of mortality, there would be a reduction of one-sixth, up to the present time; so that, by the closest examination, and arranging the results according to the best ascertained authority within reach, it follows as an approximate calculation that at the present day there are in the United States, say, eleven hundred thou-