

## Growth and Progress of Catholicity in the United States.

Only those who have given the subject study and observation realize the great and rapid increase in numbers, in power and influence in recent years of the Catholic Church in this country. Nothing can now impede her progress. Her future is most promising. The first Catholic bishopric in the United States was established, with Baltimore as the seat, in 1790. When this Episcopal See was founded the number of clergymen was 34, who had been governed by a Vicar Apostolic, and who administered to a population of 30,000 Catholics.

In 1840, half a century later, the Roman Catholics numbered 1,500,000 souls, and the Church had 16 bishops, 482 priests, and 454 churches. In 1855, the Catholic population was about 2,000,000; and twenty-one years later, in 1876, it had increased to 3,500,000, with 1 cardinal, 9 archbishops, 56 bishops, 5,358 priests, 5,045 churches, and 3,811 oratories and missionary stations. In the twenty-one years, from 1855 to 1876, the religious houses for men increased from 15 to 95; of conventual establishments from 50 to 225. In the year 1800 there was but one Catholic female academy in the country: in 1876 there were over 400. In the same period, colleges devoted to Catholic teaching, had increased from 2 to 64. These facts and figures, which are reliable, furnish evidence of wonderful vitality. Catholics are increasing in a much greater ratio than any other element of the population; the natural increase exceeds that of any other, whilst great numbers continue to come from foreign lands.

The Catholic Church in the United States is no longer composed wholly of the poorer classes, of the simple and unlearned. A single Jesuit priest, who is not yet a very old man, is known to have received more than 8,000 American Protestants into the Roman Church, ten of whom were ministers of various sects. The order of Paulist Fathers, founded in 1858 by the Rev. Father Hecker, himself a convert from Protestantism, numbers thirty-four members, nearly all of whom are American gentlemen, who were born and educated Protestants. Many of the Jesuits—who have in the United States 750 members—are Americans; the same is true of the Benedictines and the Christian Brothers, who together count 1,000 members. The late Archbishop of Baltimore in five years confirmed 2,752 converts of American birth. The average annual number of adult converts in the city of New York is said to be about 900. The Archbishops of Philadelphia and Milwaukee report that from five to seven per cent. of these they confirm are converts. The Bishop of Richmond says that thirty-five per cent. of the Catholics in North Carolina are converts, and that one parish in that State is composed wholly of converts. The Church which has won from the ranks of Protestantism and enlisted in its own service such men as Dr. Brownson, Dr. Ives, Archbishop Wood, of Philadelphia; Dr. Bayley, the late Archbishop of Baltimore; Father Hecker, Father Hewitt, Dr. Jas. Kent Stone, formerly President of Hobart College; Father Walworth, Vicar-General Preston, Father McLeod, Dr. J. V. Huntingdon, Rev. Virgil H. Barber, Rev. Calvin White, and a host of others not less distinguished, learned and venerated Americans, cannot be regarded with contempt; it must be reckoned with as a force that may be feared, but that must not be despised. In the year 1850—twenty-eight years ago—there were in the entire United States only six Catholic Archbishops, one of whom was an American, three of Irish birth, and two of French origin—and twenty-seven bishops. There were 1,800 priests, 1,073 churches, twenty-nine ecclesiastical institutions, seventeen colleges and ninety-one female academies. There are now eleven archbishops—including one Cardinal Archbishop—fifty-six bishops, 5,548 churches, 5,634 priests, twenty-one theological seminaries, with 1,121 ecclesiastical students; seventy-four colleges and 519 academies. Here is a growth in twenty-eight years of forty-four prelates, 3,834 priests, 3,475 churches, and 477 seminaries, colleges and academies.

Nineteen of the prelates are natives of the United States. The cathedrals of Pittsburg, Philadelphia, Albany, Chicago, Baltimore, Buffalo, Louisville, Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati are monuments of piety, taste and skill; the cathedral of Boston is a structure of massive beauty, 364 feet long, 160 feet wide, and 120 feet high, with two towers, one rising to the height of 320 feet. The style is purely mediæval Gothic. The new Cathedral of New York, which has now been twenty years in building, is the largest, most costly ecclesiastical structure in the New World.

The number of Catholics in New York city is very large. It is computed that within the three Dioceses of New York, Brooklyn and Jersey City—all contained within a radius of 10 miles, from the City Hall, New York—there are over one million adherents of the Catholic Church.

The growth and increase of Catholic churches in the United States, especially in the last twenty years, is something truly marvelous. Never has there been a wider or better field for the work of the Church, and never has the seed sown yielded so bountiful a harvest or produced such abundant fruit.