



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. II.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 7, 1852.

NO. 39.

THE IDEAS OF A CATHOLIC AS TO WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

Translated from the French of Abbé Martinet, for the *True Witness*.

(Continued from our last.)

STUDY OF ONE PECULIAR FEATURE OF PROTESTANTISM WHICH IS BUT LITTLE KNOWN.

The work of Mme. de Gasparin on *Marriage*, together with certain passages of *Intérêts généraux du Protestantisme Français*, (General Interests of French Protestantism,) appear to us calculated to call the attention of Catholic writers to a new (or nearly new) phase of Protestantism, viz., the moral or ascetic.

Innumerable books have been written to confute its errors, and its doctrinal contradictions; sufficient attention has not been given to its moral aberrations, the productions—more or less—of its mystical theology.

It is true that Protestantism has been rather unfruitful in this kind. Being persuaded, and justly so, that duties spring from creeds, and that practices of piety are as it were the effluence of faith, it wished, in the first place, to make unto itself a belief, so as to lay the foundation of faith. Postponing, therefore, the purifying of its morality till the time when it should be in possession of a purified doctrine, conformable in all respects to the Gospel model, it contented itself with preaching Catholic morality, minus (of course) the superstitious practices of fasting, abstinence, and maceration, much recommended by the holy Scriptures, but condemned, as every one knows, by the Bible Protestant.

Fearing that in acting thus, they might resuscitate the merit of good works,—that mortal enemy of Christian humility, (according to Luther and Calvin,) the ministers took special care to warn their hearers, that, if good works are necessary to salvation, inasmuch as they are prescribed by the divine law, they are totally void of merit for heaven. Whence comes, as we see, another Christian virtue, *moderation in virtue!*—Why, indeed, should men abound in good works, if he who practices them to the utmost is no richer at his death than he who just did what was absolutely necessary?

Nevertheless, there are some souls so ultra-Protestant as to aspire after virtues exclusively biblical, and so fervent that they cannot be satisfied with a cold and vague morality. They have sought to make a sure way for themselves through the maze of Christian obligations,—a maze which the spiritual legislatrix of Christian marriage, quoted above, has so well described. Let us hear her:—

"The line of duty is often effaced, often devious, often entangled, by a multitude of other lines which intersect, intermingle, and entwine themselves with it. It is not as if life had but one striking duty; it has a hundred, nay, a thousand intermingling, and, at times, conflicting duties, having the same pretensions to superiority, and only to be fulfilled at the expense of each other. Amidst this multitude of obligations, each and all claiming supreme authority, it becomes necessary to mark out a way; to choose amongst them, not according to preference, not by rejecting those which have no right to the primacy, but by having a care of all, and infringing on none, and establishing amongst them a conscientious order."

Thus, you see, that the region of duty, as well as that of doctrine, presents an inextricable labyrinth to the traveller who ventures into it alone. If the estimable authoress could not manage to get over the one point of the *conjugal obligations* in less than three octavo volumes, and if that long dissertation itself is very far from dispelling all doubt as to the divine arrangement of those obligations, how is it to be with the poor, simple housekeeper, who, like herself, is obliged to make her way to heaven through the maze of evangelical morality?

This book of Mme. de Gasparin might very possibly be, though all unknown to its author, one of the most severe criticisms that has ever been made on the Protestant principle.

The force of genius, strengthened still more by extensive information, elevation of sentiment, and a love of virtue—all these, the fruits of a good education and an excellent disposition—all these are insufficient to maintain our equilibrium on that hair-breadth line which, in morality, separates the true from the false, and the desirable, though ideal, perfection, from the rigorous obligation. The seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, and the truly angelic doctor, St. Thomas of Aquinas, to whom none will deny the most profound wisdom, with immense knowledge, both human and divine—even they hesitated, and decided but slowly, as is usual with saints, on points of morality not defined by the Church. Fenelon himself stumbled on that ground.

The soul disposed to good, takes fast hold of one duty, glorifies, and exalts it at the expense of its fellows; pushes it on to a failing, and from a failing to a vice, all from the simple exaggeration of a virtue; the latter being made inaccessible, finally becomes ridiculous.

Is not this precisely what has happened to the lady whose book has suggested these reflections? Who can attain the eagle height whereon she has placed conjugal fidelity? In her sex, as in ours, pigeons are far more common than eagles. Would it not be dangerous to tax wives of ordinary virtue with infidelity to their marriage vows, especially if, in conformity with another Protestant error, the most trivial acts of infidelity are declared as heinous before God as the foulest adultery?

M. de Gasparin appears to us to fall into a similar error, when, speaking of the duty of giving alms, he hesitates not to condemn the proprietor, in the name of the Bible and of Christian charity, to give the fifth part of his revenue to the poor.

If there are many of the rich to whom this tax would appear a trifling one in a case of distress, there are innumerable others who might well consider it extravagant, and thus be prevented from giving at all, because too much was required of them. The Catholic Church unceasingly exhorts her children to the practice of giving, but she never determines what amount they are to give. It is more than probable that the poor find themselves all the better for this discretion.

If the errors of noble minds have always something noble, it is not so with those of the multitude. The latter also will have religion, and virtue, but instead of adorning the interior with it, they rub it on the outside; instead of saturating the mind with it, they show it off in the streets, and even in the stables. All is religious, except man.

What does Calvinist Puritanism—that religion in which Geneva formerly decked herself out—that religion of which Scotland—that model country—is still so proud—what does it make of the sanctification of the Sabbath? A plastered corruption. Let us hear a traveller, speaking on the subject—

"Public buildings, theatres, gardens, museums, galleries of paintings, castles, palaces, taverns, all are closed against these poor people, except the high-way and the brothel. Hence, it is during this holy day that the greatest robberies and the worst deeds of all kinds are committed."

Every one knows the rigor of the Methodists, those Jansenists of reform, who make gaiety a crime, and do all they can to make life one long burial. These carry their puritanical asceticism to the most ludicrous extremes, and like the Pharisees of old, make all religion to consist in the rigorous fulfilment of exterior practices.

The study of Protestant ethics and ascetics, which we here recommend, would prove that the rule of morals, like that of faith, can only be marked out by a wisdom superior to that of man; and that, in those regions where the Catholic sun has ceased to enlighten and to fructify, minds endowed with activity are sure to ignore the medium between the icy coldness of indifference, and the feverish heat of false mysticism.

* These petty sins, these insignificant vices, are as odious in the sight of God as those which are of greater magnitude, because they are the most subtle and the most corrupt emanations of a rebellious soul.—*Du Mariage*, &c., t. ii, p. 55. For a number of other errors, great or small, see the work of M. de Champagny, already quoted.

† "The ordinary rule of my parents," says the Chancellor d'Aguesseau, "was to reserve, for the continual exercise of their charity, the tenth part of whatever they received. They regarded the poor as their children, so that, if they had ten thousand francs to invest, they deposited but eight, and gave two to the poor, whom they considered as their own flesh and blood, by a sacred and glorious adoption, which placed Jesus Christ himself in the number of their children. It usually happened, however, that the portion allotted to the poor was considerably increased because of public and private calamities. We do not believe that in all the writings of the eloquent chancellor there is one passage more beautiful than this. Those who are familiar with his life are well aware how worthy he was of such excellent parents, and can never lose sight of those beautiful words which proceeded rather from his heart than his mouth:—"How can I rest, while knowing that there are men who suffer?"

‡ *Mémoires et Voyages*, par M. de Custine, t. ii, p. 271.

§ *Mansoni's Observations sur la morale Catholique*, the *Devoirs* of Silvio Pellico, the moral works of Charles Sainte-Foi, &c., may also show what moral philosophy may gain in depth, in wisdom, and in majestic simplicity, when it consecrates a noble intellect to the service of religion.

(To be continued.)

EDUCATION IN ITALY.—118 elementary schools of the first grade for boys, and 25 for girls, are supported by the Sardinian Government; 4,242 of a second grade for boys, and 1,259 for girls. There are also 591 male private schools, exceeds \$330,000 a-year, and the number of pupils is stated to be 220,000. There are 104 institutions of a higher grade, with 200 teachers and 12,000 pupils. In the Universities there are 3,000 students, for the support of which the Government gives \$125,000 annually, and the same sum to the schools.

LECTURE BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

Delivered in St. George's Cathedral, Southwark.

"PROTESTANT OBJECTIONS TO CATHOLICISM."

His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster on last Sunday delivered the fourth and last of his series of lectures on Protestant objections to Catholic doctrines. The interest which they have excited can scarcely be overrated—to judge at least from the vast crowd of Protestant gentlemen, and even Protestant clergymen, who, night after night, have hung upon the lips of his Eminence in breathless attention, and the numerous inquiries after the truth whom they have roused from the lethargy of Protestantism. The subject last evening was "The Communion and Invocation of Saints;" and the text chosen was from the words of St. Paul to the Hebrews (xii. 22-24), "But ye are come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirit of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament." There are two distinct features (began his Eminence) which set in direct contrast the Catholic and the Protestant religion—they are the joyous cheerfulness of the one, and the sadness and gloom of the other. The Catholic knows that the road to Heaven is rough and narrow, but he has not learned that it is lonely and dismal, and so he is not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance as he threads along it. Hence, his path is bright and gay with flowers of devotion, and by its side flows the river of sacramental grace; nor does he journey on alone; on every side he is surrounded by thousands of fellow-travellers, and by his side is the Church, his own holy mother, whose arm guides him, whose voice supports him, and whose hand protects him safe from harm, so that nothing can come nigh to hurt him, unless he wander from the direct road. The Protestant does not contemplate man as he stands enriched, nay, almost deified, by the Incarnation, but in the low and degrading form of a creeping thing, as an animal which cannot take wings, and whose path, even in this world, is solitary, and dark, and ambiguous. Protestantism is not content with taking man as he is; it puts out the light which he already possesses, and picks out the darkest dogmas as those upon which it is best pleased to dwell. And hence, by the way, the selfishness of Protestantism; by which I mean not lack of zeal, but the love of isolation and self-dependence in the work of grace, and of reducing everything between God and man to what is personal and individual. Thus in theory, Protestantism looks up to Christ; but in reality, and in practice, it tends to self-conviction and self-direction; and cries aloud, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Hence, it usurps the work of God, and of the *media* which He has been pleased to appoint, and appropriates to itself at will what is the privilege of God alone to bestow, and what He gives through ordinary channels. And by consequence, the heavenward road with the Protestant is all dark and gloomy. There are no angels to cheer him on his course; no smiling saints looking fondly down upon him with palm branches and crowns; he journeys to heaven—if he be journeying thither—all alone. But with the Catholic the case is far otherwise: all is glad and cheerful on his road. Even dumb and inanimate things have their voices for him, as symbols of spiritual realities; saints and angels are comrades of his road; the dead call upon him from the grave for the aid of his prayers. The sorrowful are always pained at seeing others rejoice; and hence, I believe, arises the intense feeling of aversion, on the parts of Protestants, towards the consoling dogma of the communion of saints. Hence the holy dead, and she who is the Queen of Saints, are spoken of with scorn such as makes Catholic ears to shudder, and almost to doubt whether those who use such reproaches ever think of heaven hereafter as a place where all the redeemed of every age and land enjoy the blissful presence of God, and rejoice in the happiness of each other. It makes one indeed, suppose that the Protestant idea of heaven is that of a place where they shall be enabled hereafter to sit in sullen bliss, apart from Popish saints, and gaze on Christ their Lord, while their backs are turned upon those who have been saved, if such there be, in the Catholic religion. Oh! it is because they so little love the thought of saints here, and so little realise the saintly character and the tie of one redeemed family in heaven and earth, that they look with so little satisfaction on the saints in heaven. Yet all of you, my Protestant friends, who daily repeat your Creed (as I trust you all do,) profess each day to God that you believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints. Now, the Catholic is reproached by Anglican controversialists for having departed from the simplicity of the early creeds. The Anglican claims them as his own, and declares

that he accepts them and believes them, neither less nor more. He ought, then, to be distinct, and not to repeat them day by day by rote, without thinking what meaning he attaches to them. What, then, I ask, do you Protestants mean by those four simple words—"I believe in the Communion of Saints?" Do you mean the communion only of those who are on earth? Are you not rather mixed up with doubts and perplexities, as to whether you mean all Christians, or all the predestinate, or all holy persons of every creed, or all who are not open infidels? Have you fixed and settled all this? and have you clearly laid down what "communion" is? Is it a mere belief that there are saints, just as I may believe that there are heathens and philosophers abroad? Do I hold communion with these? Give me, then, a definition of "communion," just as you would give in worldly matters, as you would if a point of law was involved in the word; for in that case you would feel curious to know what the word means. Idle words surely ought not to be spoken to God; surely there must be a meaning in these words, or why are they inserted in so brief a form of words as the Apostles' Creed. Surely it concerns you to settle what you mean by those four words. I know not what you mean. I have tried but I cannot discover. But I have a definite belief. I know not what others hold; but I know what the Catholic Church holds; not because I have studied and inquired; I learned it as a child. With us the theologian and the child are the same; we learned it, all of us, children from the lips of our holy mother the Church. In the history of the Old Testament there are clear marks of an intercourse between the chosen race and the angels of God. Among the patriarchs, Abraham, we are told, bowed down before an angel, and Jacob was familiar with their heavenly visitations; not only did he wrestle with one, but he also saw the mystical ladder with angels ascending and descending—that vision which is the key to the whole question of their ministrations. Angels took part in leading forth the chosen race from Egypt, in giving the law from Sinai, in guiding them through their forty years' wandering in the desert (for God Himself told them that He sent His angels before them, and He bade them listen to His voice and offend Him not,) and under the Judges there were angels who, from time to time, announced the birth of deliverers. An angel appeared to David with a message from God, at the time when the pestilence was sent; and under the Prophets, angels were not mere messengers of mercy, but were seen in heaven round about the throne of God.—Is. vii. Ezekiel too saw the four wondrous beasts around the throne, and Daniel beheld, in vision, thousands of the heavenly hosts waiting on God. And thus, even under the Old Law, God made the attendance of angels known to men. But did the ministry of angels cease under the New Law. Far from it. An angel declared the coming birth of John the Baptist; an angel announced the incarnation of our blessed Lord to Mary; an angel saved Him from King Herod, and chased away the suspicions of his chaste foster-father, Joseph. Angels ministered unto Him at His temptation, and strengthened Him in His agony; the legions were ready by His side as He stood before Pilate. An angel saved Peter from prison, stood by St. Paul in his shipwreck, and showed to St. John the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. And if thus constantly they appear to minister to man, were these appearances mere exceptional cases? Not so, the mention of these instances, from time to time, implies that their ministrations were always going on, and that they were always watching over the faithful. If, in the history of some earthly king, we read that in one year he made war, and that after a few years he made peace, and again, after an interval of some more years, he gave some good laws, and if this were all that we read about him should we rightly infer that during the intervals he was doing nothing? No, we should suppose that these intervals were spent by him in similar acts, though unrecorded in history. And in point of fact it was so; the angel in the wilderness was not always visible; he was unseen for a time to the eyes of Balaam. It was so, too, in the New Testament: "there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner doing penance;" and this point our blessed Lord thought fit to illustrate by more than one parable, illustrating the joy experienced at finding something dear that has been lost. Surely this implies, so to speak, an every day occurrence. "Little children," too, as our blessed Lord tells us, have their angels which always do see the face of God, "the Father in heaven." Angels, then, always know what is happening to those over whom they watch on earth; they are always ready at hand to aid; they hold communion with this world by constant intercourse. But when Christ Jesus came in the flesh, it was to give a new life to man and to raise nature. Hence men thought it not robbery, or presumption to call themselves by the names of the saints. The word, too, was first applied to

See amongst others *Catechisms or Instructions sur la Religion Chrétienne*, Geneva, Charbeluz, 1831. *Du Mariage*, &c., t. i, page 115.