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THE CATHOLIC RELIGION

It is World-Wide and Cosmopolitan, Embracing all Tongues.

Alone it has brought light to the intellect and comfort to the heart—A Masterful Address on "The Needs of Humanity Supplied by the Catholic Church," Delivered by His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons at the Recent Congress of Religions in Chicago.

The following is the address, on "The Needs of Humanity Supplied by the Catholic Religion," delivered by His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, in the Parliament of Religions, at Chicago:

"We move and live and have our being in the midst of a civilization which is the legitimate offspring of the Catholic religion. The blessings resulting from our Christian civilization are poured out so regularly and so abundantly on the intellectual, moral and social world, like the sunlight and the air of heaven, and the fruits of the earth, that they have ceased to excite any surprise except to those who visit lands where the religion of Christ is little known. In order to realize adequately our favored situation we should transport ourselves in spirit to ante-Christian times and contrast the conditions of the Pagan world with our own.

"Before the advent of Christ the whole world, with the exception of the secluded Roman province of Palestine, was buried in idolatry. Every striking object in nature had its tutelary divinity. Men worshipped the Sun, and Moon, and Stars of Heaven. They worshipped their very passions. They worshipped everything except God, to whom alone divine homage is due. In the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the corruptible man, and of birds and beasts and creeping things. They worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.'

"But at last the great light for which the prophets of Israel had sighed and prayed, and towards which even the Pagan sages had stretched forth their hands with eager longing, arose and shone upon them 'that sat in darkness and the shadow of death.' The truth concerning our Creator, which had hitherto been hidden in Judea, that there it might be sheltered from the world-wide idolatry, was now proclaimed, and in far greater clearness and fulness unto the whole world. Jesus Christ taught all mankind to know the one, true God, a God existing from eternity to eternity, a God who created all things by His power, who governs all things by His wisdom, and whose superintending Providence watches over the affairs of nations as well as of men, 'without whom not even a bird falls to the ground.' He proclaimed a God infinitely holy, just and merciful. This idea of the Deity, consonant to our rational conceptions, was in striking contrast with the low and sensual notions which the Pagan world had formed of its divinity.

"The religion of Christ imparts to us not only a sublime conception of God, but also a rational idea of man and his relations to his Creator. Before the coming of Christ, man was a riddle and a mystery to himself. He knew not whence he came nor whither he was going. He was groping in the dark. All he knew for certain was that he was passing through a brief phase of existence. The past and the future were enveloped in a mist which the light of philosophy was unable to penetrate. Our Redeemer has dispelled the cloud and enlightened us regarding our origin and destiny and the means of attaining it. He has rescued men from the frightful labyrinth of error in which paganism had involved him.

"The Gospel of Christ as pronounced by the Catholic Church has brought not only light to the intellect, but comfort also to the heart. It has given us 'that peace of God which surpasseth all understanding,' the peace which springs from the conscious possession of truth. It has taught us how to enjoy that triple peace which constitutes true happiness as far as it is attainable in this life—peace with God by the observance of His Commandments, peace with our neighbor by the exercise of charity and justice toward him, and peace with ourselves by repressing our inordinate appetites, and keeping our passions subject to the law of reason, and our reason illumined and controlled by the law of God.

"All other religious systems prior to the advent of Christ were national like Judaism, or State-religious like Paganism. The Catholic religion alone is world-wide and cosmopolitan, embracing all races and nations and people and tongues.

"Christ alone of all religious Founders had the courage to say to His disciples: 'Go teach all nations.' Preach the Gospel to every creature.' 'You shall be witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria, and even to the utmost bounds of the earth.' Be not restrained in your mission by national or state lines. Let My Gospel be as free and universal as the air of Heaven. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' All mankind are the children of My Father and My brethren. I have died for all, and embrace all in My charity. Let the whole human race be your audience and the world be the theater of your labors.

"It is this recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man that has inspired the Catholic Church in her mission of love and

benevolence. This is the secret of her all-pervading charity. This idea has been the inspiring motive in her work of the social regeneration of mankind. I behold, she says, in every human creature a child of God and a brother or sister of Christ and therefore I will protect helpless infancy and decrepit old age. I will feed the orphan and nurse the sick. I will strike the shackles from the feet of the slave, and will rescue degraded woman from moral bondage and degradation to which her own frailty and the passions of the stronger sex had consigned her.

Montesque has well said that the religion of Christ which instituted to lead men to eternal life, has contributed more than any other institution to promote the temporal and social happiness of mankind. The object of this Parliament of Religions is to present to thoughtful, earnest and inquiring minds, the respective claims of the various religions, with the view that they would 'prove all things, and hold that which is good; by embracing that religion which above all others commends itself to other judgment and conscience. I am not engaged in this search for the truth, for by the grace of God I am conscious that I have found it, and instead of hiding this treasure in my breast, I long to share it with others, especially as I am none the poorer in making others richer. But for my part, were I occupied in this investigation much as I would be drawn towards the Catholic Church by her admirable unity of faith which binds together in a common worship 250,000,000 souls; much as I would be attracted towards her by her sublime chain of Apostolic succession, which connects her indissolubly with Apostolic times, I would be drawn still more forcibly towards her by that wonderful system of organized benevolence which she has established for the alleviation and comfort of suffering humanity.

"Let us briefly review what the Catholic Church has done for the elevation and betterment of society:

"1. The Catholic Church has purified society in its very fountain, which is the marriage bond. She has invariably proclaimed the unity and sanctity and indissolubility of the marriage tie by saying with the Founder that 'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' Wives and mothers never forget that the inviolability of the marriage contract is the palladium of your womanly dignity and of our Christian liberty. And if you are no longer the slaves of man and the toy of his caprice, like the wives of Asiatic countries, but the peers and partners of your husbands; if you are no longer the tenants at will, like the wives of Pagan Greece and Rome, but the mistresses of your household; if you are no longer confronted by usurping rivals, like Mohammedan and Mormon wives, but the queens of the domestic kingdom, you are indebted for this priceless boon to the ancient church and particularly to the Roman Pontiffs who inflexibly upheld the sacredness of the capital bond against the arbitrary power of kings, the lust of nobles and the lax and pernicious legislation of civil governments.

"2. The Catholic religion has proclaimed the sanctity of human life as soon as the body is animated by the vital spark. Infanticide was a dark stain on Pagan civilization. It was universal in Greece, with the possible exception of Thebes. It was sanctioned and even sometimes enjoined by such eminent Greeks as Plato and Aristotle, Solon and Lycurgus. The destruction of infants was also very common among the Romans. Nor was there any legal check to this inhuman crime except at rare intervals. The father had the power of life and death over his child. And as an evidence that human nature does not improve with time and is everywhere the same unless it is permeated with the leaven of Christianity, the wanton sacrifice of infant life is probably as general to-day in China and other heathen countries as it was in ancient Greece and Rome. The Catholic Church has sternly set her face against this exposure and murder of innocent babes. She has denounced it as a crime more revolting than that of Herod, because committed against one's own flesh and blood. She has condemned with equal energy the atrocious doctrine of Malthus, who suggested unnatural methods for diminishing the population of the human family. Were I not restrained by the fear of offending modesty and of imparting knowledge where 'ignorance is bliss,' I would dwell more at length on the social plague of antenatal infanticide which is insidiously and systematically spreading among us in defiance of civil penalties and of the divine law which says: 'Thou shalt not kill.'

"3. There is no place of human misery for which the Church does not provide some remedy or alleviation. She has established infant asylums for the shelter of the helpless babes who have been cruelly abandoned by their own parents, or bereft of them in the mysterious dispensations of Providence before they could know and feel a mother's love. These little waifs, like the infant Moses drifting in the turbid Nile, are rescued from an untimely death and are tenderly raised by the daughters of the Great King, those consecrated virgins who become nursing mothers to them. And I have known more than one such motherless babe who, like Israel's lawgiver in after years, become a leader among his people.

"4. As the Church provides homes for those set on the threshold of life, so

too does she secure retreats for those on the threshold of death. She has asylums in which the aged men and women find at one and the same time a refuge in their old age from the storms of life, and a novitiate to prepare them for eternity. Thus from the cradle to the grave she is a nursing mother. She rocks her children in the cradle of infancy and she soothes them to rest on the couch of death. Louis XIV. erected in Paris a hotel for the veteran soldiers of France, who had fought in the service of their country. And so has the Catholic religion provided for those who have been disabled in the battle of life, a home in which they are tenderly nursed in their declining years by devoted sisters. The Little Sisters of the Poor, have now charge of two hundred and fifty establishments in different parts of the globe; the aged inmates of these houses, numbering thirty thousand, upwards of seventy thousand having died under their care up to 1888. To those asylums are welcomed not only the members of the Catholic religion, but those also of every form of Christian faith, even those without any faith at all. The Sisters make no distinction of persons or nationality or color or creed; for true charity embraces all. The only question proposed by the Sisters to the applicant for shelter, is this: are you oppressed by age and poverty? If so come to us and we will provide for you.

"5. She has orphan asylums where children of both sexes are reared and taught to become worthy and useful members of society.

"6. Hospitals were unknown to the Pagan world before the coming of Christ. The copious vocabularies of Greece and Rome had no word even to express that term. The Catholic Church has hospitals for the treatment and cure of every form of disease. She sends her daughters of charity and mercy to the battle field and to the plague-stricken city. During the Crimean war I remember to have read of a Sister who was struck dead by a ball while she was in the act of stooping down and bandaging the wound of a fallen soldier. High praise was then deservedly bestowed on Florence Nightingale for her devotion to the sick and wounded soldiers. Her name resounded in both hemispheres. But in every Sister you have a Florence Nightingale, with this difference—that, like ministering angels, they move without noise along the path of duty; and, like the Angel Raphael, who concealed his name from Tobias, the Sister hides her name.

Several years ago I accompanied to New Orleans eight Sisters of Charity who were sent from Baltimore to reinforce the ranks of their heroic companions or to supply the places of their devoted associates who had fallen at the post of duty in the fever-stricken cities of the South. Their departure for the scene of their labors was neither announced by the press nor heralded by public applause. They rushed calmly into the jaws of death, not bent on deeds of destruction like the famous Six Hundred, but on deeds of mercy. They had no Tennyson to sound their praises. Their only ambition was—and how lofty is that ambition—that the Recording Angel might be their biographer, that their names might be inscribed on the Book of Life, and that they might receive their recompense from Him who said: 'I was sick and ye visited Me, for as often as ye did it to one of the least of My brethren ye did it to Me.' Within a few months after their arrival six of the eight Sisters died, victims to the epidemic. These are a few of the many other instances of heroic charity that have fallen under my observation. Here are examples of sublime devotion not culled from the musty pages of ancient martyrologies, or books of chivalry, but happening in our own day and under our own eyes. Here is a heroism not aroused by the emulation of brave comrades on the battlefield, or by the clash of arms or the strains of martial hymns or by the love for earthly fame, but inspired only by a sense of Christian duty and by the love of God and her fellow-beings.

"7. The Catholic religion labors not only to assuage the physical distempers of humanity, but also to reclaim the victims of moral disease. The redemption of fallen women from a life of infamy was never included in the scope of heathen philanthropy; and man's unregenerate nature is the same now as before the birth of Christ. He worships a woman as long as she has charms to fascinate; but she is spurned and trampled upon as soon as she has ceased to please. It was reserved for Him who knew no sin to throw the mantle of protection over sinning woman. There is no page in the Gospel more touching than that which records, our Savior's merciful judgment on the adulterous woman. The Scribes and Pharisees, who had perhaps participated in her guilt, asked our Lord to pronounce sentence of death upon her in accordance with the Mosaic law. 'Hath no one condemned thee?' asked our Savior. 'No one, Lord,' then, said He, 'neither will I condemn thee.' Go, sin no more.' Inspired by this divine example, the Catholic Church shelters erring females in homes not inappropriately called Magdalen asylums and Houses of the Good Shepherd. Not to speak of other institutions established for the moral reformation of women, the congregation of the Good Shepherd at Angers, founded in 1836, has charge to-day of one hundred and fifty houses, in which upwards of four thousand Sisters devote themselves to the care of over twenty thousand fe-

males, who had yielded to temptation, or were rescued from impending danger.

"8. The Christian religion has been the unvarying friend and advocate of the bondman. Before the dawn of Christianity, slavery was universal in civilized as well as in barbarous nations. The Apostles were everywhere confronted by the children of oppression. Their first task was to mitigate the horrors and alleviate the miseries of human bondage. They cheered the slave by holding up to him the example of Christ, who voluntarily became a slave that we might enjoy the glorious liberty of children of God. The bondman had an equal participation with his master in the sacrament of the Church, and in the priceless consolation which religion affords. Slave owners were admonished to be kind and humane to their slaves by being reminded with Apostolic freedom that they and their servants had the same Master in Heaven who had no respect for persons. The ministers of the Catholic religion down the ages sought to enlighten the burden and improve the condition of the slaves as far as social prejudices would permit till at length the chains fell from their feet. Human slavery has at last, thank God, melted away before the noon-day sun of the Gospel. No Christian country contains to-day a solitary slave. To paraphrase the words of a distinguished Irish jurist—as soon as the bondman puts his foot in a Christian land, he stands redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled on the sacred soil of Christianity.

"9. The Savior of Mankind never conferred a greater temporal boon on mankind than by ennobling and sanctifying manual labor, and by rescuing it from the stigma of degradation that had been branded upon it. Before Christ appeared among men manual and even mechanical work was regarded as servile and degrading to the freemen of Pagan Rome, and was consequently relegated to slaves. Christ shattered into the world not amid the pomp and splendor of imperial majesty but amid the environments of an humble child of toil. He is the reputed son of an artisan, and his early manhood is spent in a mechanic's shop.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? The primeval curse attached to labor is obliterated by the toilsmen of Jesus Christ. Ever since He pursued His trade as a carpenter He has lightened the mechanics' tools and has shed a halo around the workshop. If the profession of a general, a jurist, and a statesman is adorned by the example of a Washington, a Tanev and a Burke, how much more is the calling of a workman ennobled by the example of Christ. What Dr. Tocqueville said sixty years ago of the United States is true to-day—that with us every honest labor is laudable, thanks to the example and teaching of Jesus Christ.

"To sum up: The Catholic Church has taught man the knowledge of God and of himself, she has brought comfort to his heart by instructing him to bear the ills of life with Christlike philosophy. She has sanctified the marriage bond; she has proclaimed the sanctity and inviolability of human life from the moment that the body is animated by the spark of life until it is extinguished. She has founded asylums for the training of children of both sexes and for the support of the aged poor. She has established hospitals for the sick and homes for the redemption of fallen women. She has exerted her influence toward the mitigation and abolition of human slavery. She has been the unwavering friend of the son of toil. These are some of the blessings which the Catholic Church has conferred on society.

"I will not deny on the contrary, I am happy to avow, that the various Christian bodies outside the Catholic Church have been and are to-day zealous promoters of most of these works of Christian benevolence which I have enumerated. Not to speak of the innumerable humanitarian houses established by our non-Catholic brethren throughout the land, I bear cheerful testimony to the philanthropic institutions founded by Wilson and Shepherd, by John Hopkins, Enoch Pratt and George Peabody in the city of Baltimore. But will not our separate brethren have the candor to acknowledge that we had first possession of the field, that those beneficent movements have been inaugurated by us, and that the other Christian communities in their noble efforts for the moral and social regeneration of mankind, have in no small measure been stimulated by the example and emulation of the ancient church?

"Let us do all we can in our day and generation in the cause of humanity. Every man has a mission from God to help his fellow being. Though we differ in faith, thank God, there is one platform on which we stand united and that is the platform of charity and benevolence. We cannot, indeed, like our Divine Master, give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and to the paralyzed limb, but we can work miracles of grace and mercy by relieving the distress of our suffering brethren. And never do we approach nearer to our Heavenly Father than when we alleviate the sorrows of others. Never do we perform an act more God-like than when we bring sunshine to hearts that are dark and desolate. Never are we more like to God than when we cause the flowers of joy and gladness to bloom in souls that were dry and barren. 'Religion,' says the Apostle, 'pure and undefiled before God

and the Father is this—to visit the fatherless and the widow in their tribulation and to keep oneself unspotted from this world.' Or to borrow the words of the Pagan Cicero: 'Homines ad deos nulla re propius accedunt quam saltem hominibus dando.' There is no way by which man can approach nearer to the Gods than by contributing to the welfare of their fellow creatures."

IN BASUTOLAND.

Some of the Strange Experiences of Missionary Life There.

An Interesting Letter from the Pen of Miss E. M. Clerke—How the Natives Are Being Slowly Converted Through Tireless Efforts.

Miss E. M. Clerke has now for some time been contributing papers on foreign missions to the Illustrated Catholic Missions of considerable interest, and this month she devotes herself to Basutoland, in connection with which she quotes a very interesting letter, portions of which run thus:

A Journey to Ongeluck's Nek.

"It is now some years ago since I crossed Ongeluck's Nek on my way to one of the distant missions in Basutoland, confided to the care of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate. My guide was a colored boy. The first night we spent in an abandoned out-house; the bare ground served for my couch, and for covering an old worn-out blanket—a poor protection against damp and cold. The early morning saw us up again; and as we had no breakfast to prepare or partake of, we started in search of our straying horses. This rather lively exercise caused the blood to circulate once more through our stiffened limbs. Refreshed and invigorated by the sun, we mounted our horses and faced the unlucky Nek, which took the Griquas two years to cross, where many brave lives were lost and much valuable property. A dreary up-hill drive at length brought us to the summit, where we halted for a time to rest our horses and ourselves. Whilst gazing on the rugged scenery around us, I noticed that every molehill was in the possession of a strange kind of rat, a creature with long ears and bushy tail, which seemed to ignore our presence altogether. About midday we were again in the saddle, and rode through miles of this strange rocky country, the home of 200,000 brave Basutos. Night was falling when we reached Fox's Store, at the foot of Morosie's, famous in colonial history for the prolonged resistance offered by those who were besieged there. Weary and cold we knocked at the door of the shop, but, alas! the owner was away, there was no food, no fire in the house. The Basuto fuel was damp, and I had to sup that night on three mealy cobs, the sweetest meal I have ever enjoyed.

Next day we traveled through a most interesting stretch of country, where the Orange river winds in and out through miles of the richest and most picturesque parts of Basutoland. We spent the night at the magistracy in the quiet district. In the morning we reviewed the Basuto police. What grand soldiers the natives make when drilled!—brave, smart, dashing fellows, that General Sir M. Clarke has just reason to be proud of."

The following incidents show some of the strange experiences of a missionary's life, at one time terrifying, at another consoling:

Visiting the Natives.

"On my return journey, near Morosie's mountain, I met with a poor Catholic Basuto woman. Hers was a sad tale. The husband had become a perverser, and had married a second wife, a heathen. He often beats me when he sees me on my knees saying my prayers, and there is no Catholic near to comfort me; the heathen woman despises me, but I will never give up my religion. I baptized her two-year-old boy that night by the light of a candle. The child snapped at my fingers and made the most horrible faces, and barked like a little dog. I spoke to the unhappy father about his wretched life and apostasy. 'Yes,' he said, 'I know I am going to hell, but I wanted my child saved.' I had to leave the unhappy man. . . . My horse's hoofs got pierced through going over the sharp rocks; it was said to see the poor animal hopping for miles on three legs. I found some Basuto Catholics at Queen's Mercy, the location of George Mosheh. Years ago they had crossed over the mountain. There were schools and churches around, but no Catholic priest or teacher. I shall never forget the joy that lit up their faces when they discovered that their own priest had found them at last. How proudly they held up their rosaries for my inspection, and showed me the little crosses they had received from the Oblate Fathers in the happy long ago, whilst their speaking eyes proclaimed that they had been true to the faith! I promised that I would write to their 'Great Father' the Bishop, and ask him to send them a priest that could speak their language. They looked very sad when I was leaving them, and exclaimed: 'We have only just found the priest; must we lose him so soon?'

"Not long after this, I received a letter from a Basuto man asking me to visit his sick wife: 'You must come,' His place was 70 miles away from my mission. Darkness overtook me on the way, and I was wet and hungry when I reached the village where he lived. I asked the natives if they knew where a Catholic woman was lying ill; no one

knew, till at last an old Basuto woman exclaimed, 'Perhaps he is looking for the woman that is always on her knees saying the beads.' I soon found the good old woman who said her Rosary. She is living still, and has said many a 'Hail Mary' since then. That night they put up a little screen for me in the hut, and I got into my blanket. But the inner man was craving for food, and I remembered that a good soul had put a little bread and cheese in my pocket. I had not enough to divide with my poor Basuto, so I got my head under the blanket and commenced nibbling away. . . . I have visited our good Basutos several times since. I have baptized a number of little ones, and received some grown-up people into the Church. It is always a consolation to visit them; they come from afar to see the priest, and in his absence they meet together on Sundays to pray. I have sent them several large crosses and pictures of the Sacred Heart to hang up in their homes. 'You know,' I said to them some time ago, 'I have a very large tract of country to look after, and I cannot visit you very often.' 'Yes, Father, we know that is true, but come sometimes; if the Basutos can only look at the priest, they won't go astray.' Who could neglect such a people? The Rev. Father Monginoux visited them in March; they heard once more one of their dear Oblates speak to them of God in their own beautiful tongue. The good Father had met many of them in the heart of Basutoland long years ago, and the reunion between priest and people was touching sight. That day he baptized four, and the next morning five more were made Christians; some were received into the Church, others made their first communion, and a few went to confession for the first time. The following Sunday they traveled thirty miles to church, carrying their children on their backs, and assisted with the greatest devotion at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Rev. Father preached to them twice in their own language. About ninety Basutos listened to the instructions, thirty of whom were Catholics. It was a grand day for the Basutos, for God had heard their prayers and sent them a priest."

DOMESTIC READING.

The sunshine of life is made up of very little beams that are bright all the time.

It belongs to the upright to despise the injuries of the wicked, whose praises even are a disgrace.

The most happy man is he who knows how to bring into relation the end and the beginning of his life.

The true wealth of a man is the number of things he loves and blesses, and that he is loved and blessed by.

Men of the noblest dispositions think themselves happiest when others share their happiness with them.

It is only when joy is most passionate we are dimly conscious how often sorrow may be in its supremest depths. From the souls of those who have once gazed on celestial truth or beauty, the remembrance can never be effaced.

Men often climb half way up the ladder and stay there; but it is seldom they fall half way down and stop at the bottom.

History and reason show manifestly that the only true philosophy concerning man is that which is embodied in the Christian religion.

Here in our streets we pass face after face without a sign of recognition, but in Heaven the common happiness will speak through all eyes.

Let the action be ever so insignificant, it is impossible to perform it without the help of Him without whom nothing can be done.—St. Augustine.

There is one way of attaining what we may term, if not utter, at least happiness. It is this—a sincere and unrelaxing activity for the happiness of others.

Faith at most but makes a hero, but love makes a saint; faith can but put us above the world, love brings us under God's throne; faith can but make us sober, but love makes us happy.—Cardinal Newman.

The Church is always hampered where despotism casts its dark shadow. She blooms like a rose under the genial sun of liberty. Nowhere does she enjoy more freedom than in the United States. Nowhere is her progress more marked.

All other religions have been either national, like the Jewish religion, or territorial like Mohammedanism, or State religions like the Anglican Church. The Catholic religion alone, as the name implies, is universal, cosmopolitan, world-wide.

Surely, happiness is reflective, like the light of heaven; and every countenance bright with smiles, and glowing with innocent enjoyment, is a mirror transmitting to others the rays of a supreme and overshadowing benevolence.—Washington Irving.

The happiness of life is made up of minute fractions—the little soon-forgotten charities of a kiss, a smile, kind look, a heart-felt compliment, the disguise of a playful raillery, and the countless other infinitesimals of pleasant thought and feeling.

A cheerful temper is a perennial benefit, as well as a very rainbow of peace and joy in the home, for it bears us over and through the rough places, and not only carries its own comfort with it, but, being infectious, it distributes happiness to all around.