

"THE PASSING OF THE SAINT."

A REPLY TO AN ATTACK ON THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON SAINTHOOD

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II.

Legends and Lives of the Saints.

In particular certain Saints seem to be very displeasing to the professor who feels wroth at some story or legend that either has no foundation in fact or which he has distorted. Thus regarding the worship of relics, which he says—most falsely—"reproduced in Christian guise all the phenomena of fetishism" he adds in a tone of compassion, quoting the Summa, "the custom even received the sanction of the great Aquinas." St. Gregory the Great was by no means the first to write the lives of the Saints, as is known to every student of Church history. The Acta Martyrum were much earlier. (See Catholic Encyclopedia.) The reference to St. Anselm appears flippant and shows that the writer knows little if anything at all of the writings of this great doctor of the Church. In the quotation from Lecky on the martyrdom of St. Perpetua, who is especially dear to every Catholic because her feast together with that of St. Felicitas has been made universal for the Church by the late Pius X. and their names are mentioned every day in the sacrifice of Mass, the motive of her suffering is entirely missed. The St. Louis who was forced to "shun all female society including that of his mother" is probably misread for St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose peculiar and almost exaggerated sense of modesty can not be appreciated by any shallow unbeliever. St. Gregory VII. is vindicated long ago in history especially by the German historian Grotter (Gregory VII. and his times, 7 vol.) who from Protestantism turned to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church; and the clumsy epithet "the Politician Hildebrand" simply shows how far Mr. Meeklin is behind the times. The expression theopathic type, "found in St. Francis", is in bad taste and wanting in proper respect. The opprobrious reference to St. Theresa and to the neurotic states of female Saints is highly offensive. The latter criticism is borrowed from other authors, as the quotation marks indicate, but no names are given. We have a recollection that the strange medical work by Kraft-Ebing uses similar expressions which are by no means grounded on facts but flow from a degenerate imagination of the writer. A priest begging absolution from a poor female servant whose charitable deed he had misjudged is a highly ridiculous vagary of a dreamer, and the subsequent comment on this questionable morality in which "the individual becomes a law to himself," strangely illustrates the falsehood which appears to dominate the author's mind.

Misstatement of Purpose of Canonization.

Canonization and its purpose is repeatedly and most grossly misstated; it is looked upon as an unrivaled instrument on the part of the Church in eliminating undesirable variations. In this connection the author pours out his vial of abuse on the Church for the fact that "Abelard, a spiritual genius and one of the most brilliant intellects of the Middle Ages, is excluded from the catalogue of the Saints."

The high esteem entertained for Abelard is really amusing. It shows how little the real character of this man is known. The name of Abelard has been celebrated by modern writers we believe for no other reason than that he was a vir bellator ab adolescentia—a knocker in vulgar parlance—and had some unsavory relations with Heloise, as narrated in his Historia Calamitatum. It is for such reasons, it seems, that the sympathy of the modern un-Christian world has been extended to this unfortunate man.—Abelard on the calendar of Saints! Why it would be more ridiculous than to have Saul among the prophets. It certainly is a pity that Professor Meeklin was not consulted by the Church as to the subjects for canonization. He might propose the name of Abelard, if he thinks that miracles have been performed by the intercession of this genius. He might "start something," as the saying is, but he must follow the rules and laws of the Codex Juris Canonici.

These extracts prove sufficiently how the professor is entirely unfit to write on the subject of Saints or the Roman Catholic Church. O si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses. The policy of silence would cover a multitude of ignorance.

Criticism of Miracles.

The superficial criticism of miracles deserves a passing notice. The old misstatement is revamped that "the miracles are mainly significant as illustrating the credulity and superstition of men; they are sprung from the pious needs of an uncritical age; the miracles alleged to have been wrought upon those who sought help played a most important part in the canonization of Joan of Arc by Pius X. in 1909." Of course they did and if Mr. Meeklin has any idea of canonization, the exacting accuracy as to fact and nature of miraculous events in connection with canonization, he would at least respect the belief of Catholics and would cite in a foot note not only Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, but would quote after careful reading the Catholic Encyclopedia. We wonder whether the learned professor has ever heard of the new Canon Law, the Codex Juris Canonici which gives all the details of this process, in Lib. IV. Par 2a canon 1999-2141. (Catholic Encyclopedia. Supplement Canon Law.)

If a modern writer wants to acquaint us with the history of banking in the U. S. and in his book distorts facts and moreover omits to mention the Federal Reserve Bank, we consider his efforts a complete failure and do not dignify the work with a moment's attention. What must we think about Mr. Meeklin's abortive and false essay?

The "Social Idea" Paramount.

It becomes plain to the observant reader that there must be a sore in the mind from which such Meeklinian offensive and unreasonable statements emanate. Probably we are not mistaken if we gather from the author's scattered expressions that has a disgust for the conception which he has formed of the Saint and the attitude of the Church towards the Saint. As a modern sociologist he is naturally imbued with the ideal of human society as the be all and end of all human aspirations. As was seen in the articles on Evolution printed in Social Justice, everything must be socialized, the school, the Church, the club. The Church and religion itself are only some means of social control. Sainthood is in Mr. Meeklin's mind only the outcome of the social values of the age. The Saint in the Middle Ages may have been a social factor, but "the Saint is out of place in a democratic age." We do not seem to go astray when we say that the entire outpouring of Mr. Meeklin's inconsiderate, unhistorical and irreverent attack on the Saints and the Roman Catholic Church is prompted by a strong feeling against the great aim and end of every individual soul as taught by the Church, viz. to know, serve and love the Creator and thus save his soul. This evidently is displeasing to the professor. He would chafe at the thought that there is another world, a supernatural Kingdom for which man should strive. The Christian in Baptism has renounced Satan and all his pomps, and the world and concupiscence, and has given himself over completely to Christ, the Redeemer of his soul. The Christian's life is indeed in the world, but not of the world. Temporal goods must be for him a means to love God and obtain happiness which he can not get in this life. This is the only reasonable and dignified view of man's existence and purpose in life. Only crass materialism and base atheism such as is found in the writings of modern evolutionary sociologists, can dare to deny this noble and excellent aim of man's life on earth. The Saint realizes this aim thoroughly and clearly and shapes his actions so as to make sure of the final destiny.

III.

The Protestant ideal of "the Saint" also comes in for a sharp criticism in the introduction of Mr. Meeklin's article and again in the last pages. Orthodox Protestantism, we are told, emasculated the idea of the Saint by making it theological—whatever that may mean.—The author refers to the striking vitality and charm of the medieval as contrasted with the Protestant idea of the Saint, due to "the recognition in the former of the human side."

We may leave it to our Protestant brethren to ward off the attack launched against them by the professor. We have still to hear of a Protestant Saint. Consistently with the Reformer's doctrine there is no such thing possible as a Protestant Saint. The Lutheran justification by faith alone is essentially unmoral and excludes works of heroic virtue. The very means of sanctification are cut off by reducing the 7 sacraments to 3. Protestant contempt for Saints and veneration of Saints puts the Saint under the ban. "Undoubtedly," so we read in the Question Box, p. 152, "many outside the body of the Catholic Church, and even among the Pagans have been remarkable for their natural virtues, and often they had supernatural faith, hope and charity, which they possessed by virtue of their union with the soul of God's Church."

To be concluded next week.

National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The Trustees of the Catholic University of America have appointed Maginnis and Walsh of Boston as architects of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the great new church which it is proposed to erect at Washington on the grounds of the Catholic University. Mr. Maginnis and Mr. Walsh are widely known for their skill as architects and for their experience in church building. With them will be associated Mr. Frederick V. Murphy, Professor of Architecture at the Catholic University. It is probable that the plans of the new church will call for a Romanesque edifice of majestic proportions, capable of seating a very large audience. The sanctuary of the new church will be large enough to seat comfortably the entire Catholic hierarchy of the United States, and to provide for all religious ceremonies on a generous scale.

The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was planned about five years ago by Bishop Shahan, at the suggestion of many ecclesiastics and members of the Catholic laity, as a tribute of honor and gratitude to Mary Immaculate, patroness of the Catholic Church in the United States. It is proposed to raise at once the sum of one million dollars to begin the great work and carry it to a reasonable completion, leaving to Catholic generosity in the future the responsibility of interior finish. One hundred thousand dollars have been already subscribed, mostly in very modest sums, from all parts of the United States, and it is hoped that with the conclusion of peace the great and holy work will be taken up with much vigor.

This magnificent church will serve also most appropriately as a memorial to the Catholic soldiers and sailors who have fallen in the war, and will thus perpetuate at the National Capital the memory of our Catholic patriotism at the greatest crisis in the world's history. It is hoped by the Trustees of the Catholic University that within the next five years this splendid memorial church of Mary Immaculate will be under roof. A new attraction of general Catholic and artistic interest will then be added to the National Capital.

It is believed by our bishops and clergy that every Catholic in the United States will wish to contribute to this great monument of the Catholic religion, and that there will be little difficulty in securing the million dollars needed at the present stage for this holy enterprise, that marks wonderfully the completion of one greater era of Americanism and the beginning of another and greater era in which the beneficent religious and social forces of the Catholic Church will have free play on the widest scale.

Pius X. of happy memory, was so pleased when Cardinal Gibbons laid the great project before him, that he insisted on making a generous contribution to the work, saying that he, too, owed everything to the love and the protection of Mary.

The good work is carried on at present by means of "Salve Regina," a little paper devoted entirely to the erection of the National Shrine of Mary Immaculate. It is under the direction of Rev. Dr. Bernard A. McKenna of the Catholic University, Washington, D. C., to whom all offerings should be sent in aid of this first great monument to our Blessed Mother by the Catholics of the United States.

Late News of Ireland

Carlow

The death of Peter Murphy, Roscat, recalls stirring Land League days. He was one of the organizers of the historic meeting held in Tullow in October, 1879, at which the late Mr. Parnell and other Irish leaders addressed a crowd estimated to number thirty-five thousand. At the time the Land League was looked upon in some quarters with suspicion, and the people were urged against the danger of attending meetings attended by Michael Davitt. He was not allowed to address the Tullow meeting and in conversation afterwards Parnell expressed his indignation at this.

Cork

Cornelius O'Neill, Clerk of Petty Sessions for Blarney, Ballincollig, and Farran, has died. He was a son of John O'Neill, J. P., Glanmire.

In recognition of the successful efforts of the Very Rev. Father Thomas, O. S. F. C., in settling the recent trades disputes, the Cork Trades and Labor Council have decided to erect a stained glass window in the Franciscan Church, Cork.

Deep and sincere regret will be felt at the announcement of the death of Rev. Daniel P. Harrington, P. P., eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Harrington, Inches, Eyeries, Berehaven, which took place unexpectedly on February 4 at Los Angeles, San Francisco. The deceased was a fine type of Irish American priest, having spent more than 20 years in the mission in the United States. He was of fine physique, and was universally popular and esteemed. The circumstances attending his death were tragic in the extreme. He wrote to his parents that he was returning to Ireland for a holiday and would soon be with them. When he came to New York he could not succeed in getting a passport to travel, and was obliged to return to his parish. On the return journey he contracted influenza, which rapidly developed, and he only lived a few days. The first news his parents received after his letter announcing his intended journey to Ireland was that of his unexpected and untimely death.

Dublin

The remains of the late Edward Montgomery, 79 Connaught St., Phibsboro', were interned in Glasnevin Cemetery. Being a Crimean veteran, and, in fact, the youngest British soldier who served in the Crimea, he was accorded a military funeral, with full honors.

Limerick

The death has taken place at the Parochial House, Ballybrick, of Rev. William Ryan, P. P.

Mayo

A meeting was held at Mayo Abbey at which a campaign was initiated for the acquisition of the Rutledge farm for distribution amongst the adjoining tenantry. Rev. John Noone, Adm., and Conor Maguire, Claremorris, spoke. Negotiations have been opened for the sale of the farm either direct or through the Congested District Board.

Tipperary

Married—At St. Michael's Church, Tipperary by the Very Rev. Mgr. Ryan, P. P., V. G., James, only son of the late Michael Clifford, Bank place, to Kathleen, daughter of J. J. Fitzgerald, Henry street, Tipperary.

The Rev. John Wood, retired P. P., of Upperchurch, Thurles, died at his residence, Liseshill, Thurles at the age of 92. He was educated at Thurles.

Cardinal Gibbons Pays Tribute to K. of C. War Work.

Cardinal Gibbons, discussing the Knights of Columbus, laid particular stress on the Order's war relief activities in these words:—

"Your organization is looked upon with the greatest favor in France, where thousands upon thousands of the young men of this country who went to fight for America and democracy still remain. The reason lies not only in the fact that the work of your organization was along efficient, practical lines, but because of the manner in which the work itself was done and the human, personal touch that was put into it.

"American soldiers were made to feel that the cigarettes, candles, food and the many conveniences that were furnished by the Knights of Columbus really came from home—were sent by the fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. All that was furnished to the boys by the Knights of Columbus was furnished without charge. Nothing was sold to them. They appreciated this, and that appreciation will make itself felt keenly when those boys return.

"It was indeed fortunate for the Catholic Church and America that such an organization as the Knights of Columbus existed when the war came to America. Otherwise, the work of looking after the Catholic boys who joined the colors would have been a most perplexing task.

"As it was, the Knights stepped into the opening. Their organization formed the basis for the machinery necessary to accomplish that important work.

"The American bishops were meeting at Washington about the time President Wilson's declaration of war was issued. Immediately the bishops prepared a declaration of loyalty to the United States and its cause, and sent a copy to the White House. The benefits that America as a nation reaped from this action cannot be overestimated. In the great body of Catholics in America there were many who were of German parentage or descent; there were many Irish who were not inclined to sympathy with England, and there were thousands of other men and women who were hostile to the cause.

"When the Church spoke, however, it decided the question for them. They threw themselves heart and soul into America's cause; so by timely action on the part of the Church, material assistance was given in organizing America as a unit to win the war.

"And the Knights of Columbus throughout the war continued this work.

"The Knights of Columbus are now seeking to increase their membership to 1,000,000. I hope and believe the effort will be a success, for a greater, stronger organization of Catholic laymen will mean great accomplishments for the good, not only of the Catholic Church, but of America.

"But I want to urge that in seeking this great membership, the utmost care be taken not to destroy the quality of the organization. This is a point that should be kept in mind constantly.

"It is not a secret organization, any more than a corporation—one of your large department stores, for instance—is. The corporation has certain secrets—organization secrets—which it withholds from the public. So have the Knights of Columbus, but no more. Both the Knights and the corporation would reveal and have revealed those secrets to any properly constituted authority, civil or otherwise. If occasion arose that made it advisable."