

Library Special The Sword Of Prayer

By Rev. Benedict Flynn

The Sword of the Spirit has taken its place in the Church. It is the Word of God, and they shall be created and shall stand before the face of the earth." The powers of the Sword are not so much physical for the Christian, but they know that is coming, and is even now working among us. They are thinking that it will be total, and not civil, and will control the world.

Let us I described the origin and aims of Sword of the Spirit, pointing out this very valuable article in the spiritual program of prayer and action.

1. Prayer. If the world is to be brought back to God, prayer must surely be the first order of day. This is our first defensive and offensive weapon. But are we really convinced? Do we really say it through? Prayer was Christ's weapon even in His Passion. Acting as an army, armed with the sword, said the Sorrowful. If we are convinced of the need of prayer, perhaps we have wings riding them.

For instance, thinking that prayer is merely asking God to stop us from getting into the ocean, because our boat will sink, and so on, course, is it that we can't be the power of evil or good. God said, "Ask, and you shall receive. But if that is all we think it is, and we continue only on that, there is danger of a very dangerous fall of discouragement.

Prayer is far more than getting something to what we want. It comes in. Prayer is a future; let's say, an adventure. Learning really how to pray is like learning how to swim. There comes a time when the soul has to get his feet off ground and trust to the water to pull him up. I am praying is like that. Off your feet and the ground. Let there be nothing of your own to hold on to. Give yourself entirely to God. Trust yourself to arms. He will hold you up, as the water holds swimmer up. The timid soul who does not trust himself to the water will never know the adventure of swimming out where the waves roll high and where dangers thus have to be done; he will be confined to dabbling and splashing in the shallow.

There ought to be many times a day when our prayer acts for nothing, but devoles only to give ourselves to God. This kind of praying is beautiful, described by Caryl Bouscaren in *This Is the Passion*:

"The last offering I know is just to say the word 'God' and let it pervade you; but if you're going to use that word take five, or even three, minutes a day to think about God; think that you are only alive because at this moment He wills to be alive, because at this moment His love offers you, wills you to be; think that His eyes are upon you. His hands are around you, they shelter us as a flame is sheltered in the storm."

Sursum Corda

Thomas Jefferson, Nobody's Fool

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

A syndicated newspaper column which shall here be nameless contained, in the midst of a frequent outcry of Thomas Jefferson, the accusation that he was deaf, dumb, blind and stupid. The author of the column didn't put it in just those terms, what he wrote can fairly be interpreted as equivalent of an insult to his intelligence and suspicion that he couldn't see what was before his eyes or hear what was shouted into his ears.

"I have always had a great reverence for Jefferson," said the columnist, "but on one occasion he put down on paper an opinion that is nothing but blithering nonsense. It turns out that the "blithering nonsense" is sentence in the Declaration "all men are created equal." What could be more stupid, said the columnist, and what more artificially absurd? And goes on to proclaim that men are not equal and any one who looks at them or listens to them, see that they are not equal.

This indictment of Jefferson's common sense veracity, or eyesight, or of all of these things together, is not new. I have heard it and read it a hundred times. But it amazes me that the newspaper writer could himself have written obvious nonsense in the very act of accusing Jefferson of having done so.

Consider what the indictment means. It means that Jefferson couldn't see that some men are brighter and wiser than others; that some have extraordinary talent and others have little or none; that some men have clear genius and that others are half-wits. How can anyone imagine that Jefferson, who himself possessed intelligence of such a high order that it amounted to genius, somehow failed to see what any fool could tell him?

Did Jefferson never listen to a stupid conversation—or, perhaps a monologue conducted by some crackpot and pompous bore? Did he never sit in at a legislative assembly and suffer from the daze that goes on in such groups? Did he never speak to a foolish political orator, shouting and barking, shouting, gesticulating and saying nothing worse than nothing? Why? Where does the columnist think Jefferson spent his time? Does he imagine that by some infallible dispensation of divine Providence all the men with whom Jefferson came into contact were the children of Washington, Franklin, Roger Sherman, Livingston, Wright, Walker and the rest?

Jefferson had ears to hear, eyes to see and a mind with which to think. One would imagine therefore that when he—and by the way all the others—put their signature to the "self evident truth" that men are created equal, the obvious thing to ask is "what did they mean? Equal in what sense? Equal in what characteristics?"

What Thomas Jefferson and all the other signatories to the declaration meant is as a matter

of record. You had better, and my law it is to make that settle a point. It will be better when you read in the *CATHOLIC COURIER* that the *Book of the Living Powers*, being addressed to Jesus Christ the King, was given about six thousand years ago, and that the author was not the saintly monk St. Bernard, but the saintly monk St. Benedict.

That is all forgotten history. In the memory of the church of Christ, it is what the saint of God is doing that makes the world move. His mission is to take away the spiritual darkness of the world, educated for us by the world we live in, and bring up Christians completely to Him. We cannot do this unless we take ourselves up to God. And God, the one we take up to, is living also in us a living spirit. That is why it is my duty, I feel it, to say to my people, "Go in your way, comfort, I give you up to you. I give myself up to you. I'll go as fast as I can back to God. This is my life, as God is my life. Now, I leave you as the Lord through a window. Let me not leave the last in the world with you."

When we make sacrifices for the interests of man, the flesh and blood of God, our best defense will be a potent prayer. But our actions and our words, in such divine relationships, lead us into the surrounding grace. That means that the living interests of our human spirituality are gathered more and more into the strong positions of the Precious Heart of Jesus. The source of our heart are purified and enlarged to the stature of the source of Christ. In Christ and with Christ, we will be able to give to God. The Father sees it in the face of His well-beloved Son, to Whom He can return smiling. When we speak it in the name of Jesus that the Father hears in our hearts, when our hearts call out Our Father Christ calls it out within us too, and all the mighty powers which follow—Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done . . . this is this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. All these mighty aspirations are impelled by the Heart of Christ abiding with our own, and God is before us before them.

That is the way and the power of the living, tested Christian spirit. Then we begin to see that and, best of all, do it, since our other earthly ambitions will vanish, too. We will see how our own pray that was everywhere you don't have to knock down, even as we go on to some further, you don't even have to step back to do it. Wonderful, isn't it? And we will see that there is no wasted service, no prayer of this kind which God doesn't hear in or answer; every such prayer, complete a blessing upon the world from the heart of God. Having stepped up finally to God, and leaving everything in His hands, the soul comes to know that even though its own petitions are not granted, that too is a blessing to dispense; and those prayers which do not bring a blessing from the right, will always bring one from the left.

Definitions of space prevent any further expansion of the program of the Powers of the Spirit, but this theme of prayer is so important for our time that I do not regret having to cut off the other themes for another issue. I am indebted to Russell and Ward for the quotation from *This Is the Passion*, a book you can get at the Catholic Evidence Library.

fact a fundamental dogma. It is essential to our religion as well as to our political system. We have it on one of the first pages of the *catechism*: "Man is a creature composed of body and soul, made to the image and likeness of God." If a man is King he is no more than that; if he is a divulgator or a charcoal burner or a chimney-sweep or a coal-heaver, he is nevertheless a creature of God, made in the image and likeness of God. Jefferson was leading to the conclusion that man as man was entitled to citizenship, to justice and right and freedom, and that no man was entitled to more right or more justice or more freedom than another. In other words that one man is equal to another.

There is a familiar expression usually spoken in jest but prudently and legitimately correct: "There's about as much human nature in some folks as there is in others." That's what Jefferson was saying. Or as Bobbie Burns put it "the rank is not the guinea's stamp, the man's the gold for a that." If one the "gold" the find the image of God. The Scott poet continues, "a prince can make a belted knight and marry a duchess, and so forth, but only God can make a man." Because a man is a man," says Jefferson, "he is entitled to what I should now proceed to write into the Declaration," and he is a duke or marquis, a belted knight, he is king for us we should say now a royal he is the King of England before God he is only a man, and as man he has no more and no greater essential and natural rights than any other man.

We Catholics have suffered the severest from misunderstanding of our doctrine. We say, for example, "The Pope is infallible," and misunderstanding impetuous critics go into a brain storm. They write treatises and books and literature to prove that Popes have made mistakes in political or scientific affairs and that Popes have not all been saints. We say, "They don't take a peek into our sacraments and see what we mean by 'infallible'?" Why don't the critics of Thomas Jefferson, instead of wringing him of an astute blunder take the pains to find out what he meant when he said that all men are created equal? Or why don't they at least stop and ask themselves the question, could so illustrious a man have been such an infallible fool?

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FIVE and TEN Years Ago

From Thursday, Apr. 11, 1923 Edition

With the Most Rev. Gerald Murray, D.D., Bishop of Victoria, B.C., heading the list of authors, the *CATHOLIC COURIER* announced a special series of articles on Our Lady of Perpetual Help to be published in conjunction with a Novena of Wednesdays at St. Joseph's Church, Victoria.

From Thursday, Apr. 11, 1923 Edition

That a beautiful new marble altar, gift of the late Mrs. Mary Collins, would be the center of Easter services in Immaculate Conception Church, Victoria, was announced by the Rev. Dr. William Byrne, pastor.

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