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CENTENNIAL ADDRESS. TO THE CATHOLICS OF THE UNITED STATES.

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[New York Catholic Review.] The following able and instructive address was delivered before the annual convention of the delegates to the Catholic Central Association, who met in Philadelphia on Whit-Monday, June 5. As the delegates are Germans, the speaker used their language; but, as the address is a Centennial one, concerning the Catholics of the entire United States, it has been translated into English, and we have great pleasure in laying it before our readers:

Gentlemen of the Catholic Central Association: It is now twenty years since the Catholic Central Association assembled on Pentecost for its general Conference. My vocation as missionary has hitherto always occupied me elsewhere. The celebration of the Centennial of the Independence of the United States of America is, however, an event which has decided me to yield to the gratifying invitation of your Executive Committee, to be with you on the present occasion.

The Independence of the United States has a great and important significance for the Church in general, but especially for us Catholics, who have sought and found here a new home. Besides its general interest, the great historical event which the United States now celebrates has an important one to myself. It has been my lot to spend one-half of my life in Europe, mostly in universities, lycées and colleges, occupied in instruction. In later years, however, I turned my attention to the missions. The arrogance of bureaucracy, which dominates across the Atlantic, is well known; and I felt myself frequently bound back and forth in my movements, by its constraints.

I felt in Europe, to illustrate my thought, like one embarked on a shallow yet rapid stream; even in danger of being driven back by the power of a contrary current. I longed to find a deeper, a more favorable channel, desired to hear the signal cry: "No bottom!" This I found here, in America!

On this ocean I have now sailed for twenty-eight years—almost a third of the period of American Independence. Hence it seemed to me that, among foreigners, I was entitled to be present here during the Centennial celebration, and to celebrate in your midst this important epoch. I thought that my words would have a wider effect on such an occasion, and I trust it will be so if you listen with attention and sympathy to what I have to say to you, or rather to all the Catholics of the country.

I want to lead your thoughts to the answers to the following questions: First. In what special relation does the Church stand to America? Second. In what special relation do we Catholics in America stand to the Church? Third. What is the special position and task of the Catholic Central Association in regard to this?

It is not without a purpose that I emphasize the word: "In what special relation does the Catholic Church stand to America; for in general relations America and all other countries stand alike. Christ sent His Apostles over the whole world to preach His Gospel to the farthest boundaries of the earth. Through them and their successors was the light of salvation to be made known to all people. No sooner was the extreme northern portion of America discovered and inhabited than the Mother Church turned her eyes upon it. The proofs of this are the churches and the Episcopal See of Greenland, whose foundations date far back towards the earliest centuries of Christianity. And no sooner had the discovery of Columbus, than that great hero, the first European who placed foot upon the American shores of the New World, raised the Cross with his own hand; and the Church by her missionaries, spread the kingdom of Christ on the soil of the newly discovered continent.

For a considerable time, all the Europeans who stepped upon American ground, were children of the Catholic Church. The name itself, which the vast extent of country bears, is that of a Catholic. This is not because with the other portions of the world, and in it would seem to lie an arguement that America is that part of the world in which a grand and more important future is destined for the Catholic Church, and that the time when Time is inclining to its end. It is from America that the sun daily goes down towards the night of Time. This allusion may to some perhaps sound at first only like a poetic fancy; but when we are acquainted with the typical or symbolic character of the sanguinous scheme of salvation, and have studied the remarks of the holy Fathers on the subject, then this allusion presents to our mind not only a poetic picture, but an earnest, deep and mighty truth.

The human race, from its very cradle in Asia, has always advanced with a growing distinctness, and with increasing influence on the fate of nations, towards the West. It is in the most noticeable that culture, too, civilization and education, have taken the same course. It was not the Chinese, the Persians, nor the Japanese who left to posterity acquisitions in science, philosophy, or art in its classic form; but the Greeks and Romans, who arrived at the culminating point of purely human civilization. There is another fact still more remarkable, and yet better calculated to elucidate my assertion. When the Apostles separated to go over the whole earth, the two principal among them went to the West.

countrymen of the hardships that it cost the first missionaries to lay in this land the foundation stone of the true faith, and yet he speaks but very cursorily of their labors and endurance. Hence, if there exists a Church which has a claim on American ground, it is the Catholic Church, as it was she that first took possession of it, and as it was Catholic blood, which moistened the fields of evangelical labors in this illustrious part of the world. It was not until later years that the preachers of the different sects came; but they never succeeded in converting one Indian tribe to Christianity. What Tertullian said, 1700 years ago, of the sectarians of his time, became true of them also: "Perverting they understood, but not converting." Especially worthy to be under the Catholic Church in her labors, and to make of bad Catholics still worse Protestants, but they did not understand how to convert the heathen. Who can tell what would have been the success of the Catholic Church among the Indians of the North, had she been allowed to continue unmolested the work which she had begun? Let her to-day labor in peace, and give her the assistance which is given to other sects, and she will soon victoriously finish her work.

With the seed of faith, these first Catholic missionaries carried also the seed of civilization; and as far as European Christian civilization is concerned, no one acquainted with the history of nations will dare to deny that the Catholic Church transformed the wild heathen that, after the downfall of the Roman Empire, overwhelmed Europe into Christian nations, and thus, by educating them for society, laid the first stones of modern civilization. This fact is denied neither by Montesquieu nor by Voltaire, and none of our present "combatants for culture" are able to gainsay it.

What would England, France, and especially Germany, be at the present day, if the Catholic Church had not been? Especially worthy to be under their social education? Most probably they would still be wildernesses, and their inhabitants perhaps not much better than the Indians in the forests behind the Rocky Mountains. Even at your Centennial exhibition, do not the displays of the Catholic nations—France, Italy, Spain, and even Brazil, in works of industry and art, far exceed those of those of the Protestant nations, and in some departments decidedly surpass them?

The United States of America is the land which, in later times, has understood how to make the most practical use of the acquisitions of modern civilization for the promotion of material purposes, and for the temporal welfare of its inhabitants. It has been given to those of the Protestant nations, and in some departments decidedly surpass them? The United States of America is the land which, in later times, has understood how to make the most practical use of the acquisitions of modern civilization for the promotion of material purposes, and for the temporal welfare of its inhabitants. It has been given to those of the Protestant nations, and in some departments decidedly surpass them?

Were the Church to be banished, and the United States to become a Catholic country, in the true sense of the term, then would this become a land in which, as in a mirror, the nations of Europe and the whole earth might see how happy, even in regard to temporal affairs, the Church can make a people when they, as children of one God and of one mother Church, live in brotherly love and harmony regarding the things of this world, and in the things of the faith, and always following the voice of their conscience and of the Church, as their teacher, to guard them and to lead them in the way of virtue.

Hence, a highly esteemed paper, which appeared in Rome, hesitated not to say that the Church, that Rome, looked upon no land under the sun with more sympathy than upon the United States of America. And that the light of the true faith might enlighten them. And why should not this be so in truth? Our hope, in regard to it, seems to gain strength when we look at the character of the greater number of the citizens of the United States of Anglo American descent. The question is not as to the opinion of the Holy Church, but as to the character of the American as such. The American esteems the Catholic Church in his heart; he acknowledges her conservative elements, and is anxious to become acquainted with her doctrines. He esteems especially the clergy of the Catholic Church, and if he becomes a Catholic, he is generally a Catholic of sterling worth.

He has had, as missionary, opportunities of becoming acquainted with this fact. If I am asked the reason why this is so, I answer: Because the qualities which make the American a loyal citizen of the United States will, when united with the religious element, be just those which characterize the Catholics as a true and faithful Christian. The character of the American character are: decision, energy, unwearied striving after an appointed aim, great enterprise and self denial, combined with benevolence and readiness to acknowledge merit. Are these not precisely the characteristics of a zealous Catholic? The American sees that in the Church the way is open to every one to lift himself from the lower humbler grade in society to the glory of the Papal throne, as in the United States every citizen can aspire to the Presidency.

He sees with satisfaction that, long before political parliaments, the Church in her Councils always had entire liberty of speech. The celebrated Father Burke, who had become well acquainted with America and with the American character, hesitated not to say to his countrymen on his return to Ireland, that he hoped he would close his eyes before the conversion of the United States to the Catholic faith. But he has reason to hope this only on the fulfillment of one condition, which is, that every child of the Catholic Church in the land, both priest and layman, shall work for this purpose to the best of his ability and with united zeal and power.

This latter remark leads to the second question which I propose to discuss to-day, namely: "In what special relation do the Catholics of America stand to the Church?" A parallel may here be justly drawn between the conversion of the Roman Empire and the endeavor to convert the United States. It was not the bishops and priests alone who converted the Roman Empire to Christianity; for bishops and priests were compelled to live in seclusion on account of the persecutions that raged especially against the clergy. They were at that time less engaged in converting the heathen than in taking care of the faithful and administering the means of salvation. But every layman among the Christians during the first centuries was a missionary, an apostle in his station and sphere, and Peter had good reason to call the Christians of that period a priestly people.

Such men, truly apostolic Catholic laymen, America needs in our day to secure the triumph of the Church. The question may now arise, in what manner is this work to be begun? Is a layman to exercise the apostolic offices of the Church in her sanctuary? Surely not! On the contrary, nowhere is the line more sharply drawn between priests and laymen than in the Catholic Church. But there are means, notwithstanding, which while lying beyond the pale of the priestly office, yet exercise a most powerful influence upon the conversion of infidels and heretics, as well as the progress of the true Church. There is, besides the Word which is preached with apostolic authority, and which includes the distribution of the holy Sacraments, also an apostolate accessible to laymen. The apostolate of good life; the apostolate of the press; the apostolate of the press; the apostolate of social life, and finally, the apostolate of prayer. I say, firstly, there is an apostolate of good example, according to the admonition of Christ:

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The force of good example we see by casting a glance at the behavior of the confessor in the early times of Christianity. Pliny and other profane writers of that period testify how greatly the heathens were astonished at beholding the pure life of the first Christians. "What religion must that be," they said, "that endows men with strength to live so perfect a life, in the practice of the most noble virtues?" They examined and believed.

Gentlemen, let the millions who call themselves Catholics in America really live a Catholic life, and the people of this country will soon open their eyes and recognize the truth of the Catholic faith. Especially worthy to be in the case if all the Catholics lived so pure and virtuous a life in the midst of the corrupt morals which in these days overwhelm the world and make such terrible development here in America.

I say, secondly, there is an apostolate of instruction open to laymen. Proof of this may again be found among the early Christians, and among the apostles of the Holy Fathers, who address the people as if all of them were educated theologians. So informed ought every Catholic in America to be that he might be able, everywhere and to every one, publicly and privately to give testimony of his faith; but how few are really able to do this, and yet it ought to be given now than in the earlier days of Christianity, by reason of the aid to be derived from the many books of instruction written for this purpose. Did every household possess these, and were they frequently read in the family circle a people thoroughly instructed, strong and immovable in their faith would grow up.

There is, thirdly, an apostolate of the press. We read in the history of the early Christians that a circulation is formed there under the name of "Apostolate of the Press," which the Holy Father has approved and warmly recommended. This is saying much in its favor, but not too much, when we consider the influence which, according to experience, the press exercises over the minds and actions of men, particularly in this country. The press should make a duty to distribute suitable controversial and instructive books among the non-Catholics. A person who reads alone, with his mind concentrated on the book in his hand, has far better opportunities of becoming convinced of the truth of what he reads than one who hears parts of it discussed.

Would it to God that the true faith only the tenth part of what the Protestants do to combat the truth and to spread error, by the distribution of books and tracts. Protestants send their copiers through city and country, and throw heretical books and tracts full of aspersions and calumnies into every house, while we rarely send a single family library. Still more rarely do we find Catholics who think of distributing such books among those of another belief. Protestants spend millions for this purpose. If we Catholics labored with the same energy, how great and beneficial would be the influence which we should exercise for the welfare of the Church and for the honor of God. For, thanks be to God, there is no police here commanded by Bismarck, to confiscate and destroy such books and pamphlets.

Besides this Apostolate of the Press, by means of books, there is also another, not less important, through the daily newspapers. How energetically in this regard do Protestants and enemies of the Holy Church make efforts, the object being in order to poison public opinion by their journals and illustrated papers against the Catholic Church and her servants! Catholics ought in like manner to be provided with Catholic daily papers to further the welfare of the Church. This is the case here in Philadelphia, in New York and in St. Louis, but how little is the case in the Holy Church make efforts, the object being in order to poison public opinion by their journals and illustrated papers against the Catholic Church and her servants! Catholics ought in like manner to be provided with Catholic daily papers to further the welfare of the Church. 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