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LECTURES 215
ON
RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

Chiefly Doctrinal,

DELIVERED AT ST. MARY'S, MOORFIELDS,

BY THE

RIGHT REV. NICHOLAS WISEMAN, D.D.

Bishop of Melipotamus, and Pro V. A. L.

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MDCCCXLVIII.

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RIGHT REV. NICHOLAS WISEMAN, D.D.

BISHOP OF MELIPOTAMUS, AND PRO. V. A. L.

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LECTURE THE FIRST.

Introductory.

"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."
1 Corinth. iii. 19.

It is perhaps, my dear Brethren, no bad test of our mode of apprehending the doctrines of our blessed Lord, to remove them from the distance whence they appear to be addressed to us, to suppose them to be delivered in a scene, and amid circumstances familiar to us; and then to try them by the standard of our every-day judgments, and see how practically we there decide concerning them.

Let us then, for a moment, imagine, that not 1800 years ago, but in our own busy and stirring times; not in the relaxing climate of the east, but here, where every nerve is on the stretch with energy and activity; not in a land, where every one reposed under his own vine or fig-tree, but in this country, where every one must strive and struggle to keep

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himself but standing in his place ; not in a city, all the inhabitants of which could lie beneath the shadow of its one solitary temple, but in the midst of this giant city, in which are more ambition, wealth, and activity, than in perhaps any other that the world has known :—nay, not far from this very spot, in one of those courts of a temple, not of the living God, but of his rival Mammon, the god of the age and place, where the merchant-princes of this world daily transfer with a smile, from hand to hand, what would have formed the revenue of an ancient empire, let us imagine that there should stand the reputed son of a carpenter, and with thrilling accents and noble mien proclaim aloud, to every passer by: “Wo to you that are rich, for you have your consolation: Wo to you that are filled, for you shall hunger: Wo to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep: Wo to you when men shall bless you:” (Luke vi. 24—26) would His words, my Brethren, be heeded? Would they reach the hearts of His hearers, and induce them to pause and reflect? Nay, I may boldly ask, would He not be either passed by in silent pity and contempt, or rebuked aloud, or perhaps even delivered up, as a disturber of the public peace? But, it may be said, that had He to whom I have alluded, appeared in the midst of us, He would have come arrayed with those evidences of power and authority, which He displayed, when engaged on His divine mission; and His miracles wrought before all men, would have sufficed to gain the attention and acquiescence of all. But alas! has He not

himself assured us, that not even the coming of one from the dead, to preach, would convince those who would not learn from the inspired writings even of the Old Testament? And did not the Jews see Him, in their day, giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, cleansing lepers, and freeing the possessed, and even raising the dead to life, and yet did not believe, and persevered and died in their unbelief? And of the thousands who daily, with anxious looks and hearts, hurry along the streets of this metropolis, to their daily work, how few would slacken their pace, still less go out of their way, to see miracles wrought by One who taught that riches are a bane, a thorny weed, a curse; that laughter and merriment and revelry are a folly and delusion, and that poverty, abasement, mourning, contempt, are rather to be loved and courted!

And yet, my Brethren, if then He preached these doctrines, so would He repeat them now; for His word passeth not away. Yet if He were here and now thus to teach, what security have we that He would be treated better, or listened to with greater docility than He was before? Then let me ask, of those who profess to believe in His word, does one in ten thousand do so practically, and with a true conviction of the reality of these great truths? Nay, who is there of us all, that brings home to himself the doctrine, that poverty, and hunger, and weeping, are not merely often subsequent, but, by rule, consequent to being rich, and filled, and joyful, and blessed by men?

And wherefore, my dear Brethren, is it thus? Because the world, which was the enemy of our blessed Saviour, when He came to purchase us with His precious blood, is no less His enemy even now. Because that world, however represented—whether its type be the proud and self-sufficient Pharisee, or the subtle and scoffing Greek, or the haughty, imperious Roman, or the rude and obstinate barbarian, or the worldly, philosophizing men of the present age—the world, however thus represented, is still the scorner, is still the enemy of the Lord of truth. Our blessed Saviour came not to bring peace into the world, but the sword—He came to stand in direct hostility to this world of evil; and that enmity was not to end with His life. For He left behind Him followers who were to be the inheritors of that hatred and that scorn, as well as of those doctrines which had brought these upon Him. He prepared them by telling them that the disciple was not above his master; that, if they had called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household. (Matt. x. 25.) And on that great day when he ascended into Heaven, when His apostles gazed on Him rising in glory, even as Eliseus looked upon his master ascending in his chariot of fire, not only did He let fall on them that mantle of dignity and honour in which His father had invested Him: but He let drop upon them, also, that white robe of the fool in which Herod had clothed Him, and in which his courtiers had mocked Him. Even the apostles themselves were forced publicly to own that Christ crucified, whom they preached, was

“to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness.” (1 Cor. i. 23.) In other words, as the wisdom of this world is but foolishness with God, so, likewise, is the divine wisdom of Christ our Lord but foolishness in the eyes of this ill-judging world.

It may be somewhat humiliating to us, my dear Brethren, to feel that so mean a note and criterion of truth should have been thus established. Yet it is but fitting that, while we can decide who are the true disciples of the All-wise Teacher, by the splendid doctrines which they alone jealously preserve: while we can give evidence of the Church, founded by the All-powerful Conqueror of death, from her victories and triumphs over the world and its invisible allies; so we should be as well able to distinguish both the true Church and her true disciples, by the badges of scorn and contempt which they publicly wear, as the only real representatives of a mocked and crucified Lord. Yes, as when the shepherds, who asked the angel for a sign whereby they might know the newborn King of Israel, received no better than this:—“You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger,” (Luke ii. 12,) and yet by this as certainly found the Lord of Glory, as if His heavenly beauty, or a divine radiance hovering round Him, had been given them for a mark:—so no less from the beginning of the Church to the present day, the Spouse of Christ may have been as truly recognised, by those notes which before the world humble and degrade her, as by the more glorious attributes which have ever attended her career.

When we look back on the early struggles of Christianity, we have indeed no difficulty in recognising the existence of its necessary conflict with established principles of evil, in recognising which of the combatants represents the truth. For there, on the one side, the splendid virtues shine so clear, which reflect the perfect example, and embody the pure doctrines of our Lord, that no man can hesitate to determine which is His side. We follow with intense interest the chances of the strange, and seemingly unequal, contest: we see the two powers engaged in close and earnest conflict, giving and receiving fearful shocks: now so entwined in skilful wrestling, that they can scarcely be separated, but form one confused mass, till, by degrees, the one is perceived panting and exhausted, and the victory belongs to the strong and the good. And, after every struggle, we find some evil principle vanquished, some fatal error overthrown, and fresh virtues and great truths brought out and established. We easily discern which is then the world—the enemy of God, which its wisdom—the folly before *Him*. So long as it is a *heathen* world, and is identified with the power, the influence, the avowed principles of a pagan empire; while it is linked with palpable and shocking error, and with open degrading vice, we hesitate not to glory in the conflict, and claim a share in its issue. We side with the Gospel, with religion, with the Church; we bless the power that was given it to overcome and to subdue wills, and principles, and reasons, and all the outward splendour, wealth,

and dominion which upheld them, and could not but fall that the others might be overthrown.

But, alas! it is far different when the unceasing conflict has reached our own times. Here we find it far more difficult mentally to realise its existence or practically to decide upon its merits. And yet we know that still that same warfare must hold on; that still that same Church endures, and that same world; and that, therefore, the conflict goes on between them, irreconcilable, and eternal. But, being placed ourselves upon the battle-field, amidst the cry of the contending sides, now mingled together in utter confusion, shrouded by the mist and dust of the medley, we seem often unable to distinguish friend from foe; and we may naturally ask for the cognizance of the Leader whom we ought to follow—the standard of our side, round which alone it is good or safe for us to rally.

My Brethren, this is easy to decide. It is the Cross of Christ—that which was of old “a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Gentiles foolishness,” even as yet must form the banner, beneath which we fight, with Christ Jesus, and against the world. It must be even now a poverty and a lowliness of spirit, it must be Christian humility, it must be meekness and gentleness of conduct, it must be a penitential bearing which forms the outward characteristic of those on His side: while they who constitute the world, in this age as in every other, must, on the contrary, be the men that struggle for the mastery in all that concerns its interests, they who

love what our blessed Saviour condemns, its riches, its abundance, its pleasures, its smiles and blessings. Wherever these may be met, under whatever name they are ranged, to whatever religious section they belong, they constitute unfortunately that vast overwhelming majority against which the true followers of Christ are engaged in perpetual conflict—they may for a time appear to gain a victory, but in the end they yield beneath the higher destiny, and that divine power, which animate and strengthen the combatants on the other side. But one characteristic difference there must be, whereby the one, from the other, side may be more clearly distinguished. I have already alluded to it when comparing the fate of the Church of Christ with that of its divine Master. She must ever be the object of reproach to the great world of ignorance, error, and sin. This will ever constitute one of her great characteristics. Through every age we shall find it thus; we shall see the Church of Christ as much distinguished by the contempt of those who have considered themselves the great ones of the world, as by any of those more splendid marks which are so often brought before your consideration as evidences of her truth. For, although, with sorrow and shame we must confess, that even within the true Church of Christ are many, too many, who not acting up to their professed belief, belong, in spirit and in practice, rather to the world than to her, yet will she, as a body and as a system, be ever found to draw down upon herself the scorn of the wise men according to earth, and be

considered as at variance with principles of worldly wisdom, and the desires of the carnal heart.

Thus, my Brethren, if we see a Church which can adapt its teaching to what are deemed the exigencies of the times, and can bend its pliant doctrines so as to fit into all the most elegant mouldings of the social edifice ; where the loftier and austerer truths of Christianity are seldom, or but cautiously announced, so that the rich and covetous man, or perhaps even the libertine, may attend its services without danger of hearing the trumpet of judgment sounded in his ears ; where the standard of action and of conduct is what is orderly, decorous, and not extreme, and the chief aim of its education for clergy, as for laity, is secular learning and elegant proficiency ; which quietly takes its place as one more institution among the several that compose the state, ready to receive from it, its pastors, its tone, and its very principles,—such a Church may indeed be disliked and even hated, but it will not be despised. It moves within and with the world, shares its honours and its riches, avoids startling or shocking it by contradiction or contrariety, and shows itself swayed sufficiently by what the world considers prudence and its own wisdom. There is no inheritance here of the mockery, and reproach of folly, from the wise and great of earth, which should mark the Church of God.

But look now upon the Catholic Church, as it exists in this country, and then see how far this sign of truth has been given *her*. I will not hesitate to say boldly, that in her is not wanting this proof of grace :

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for she has her full share in those very reproaches which followed the teaching of the apostles, nay of the blessed Redeemer Himself. And first I would ask you, to whom by preference does this Church belong? Does she seek the courts of the great? Does she wait on the will of princes? Does she not look rather to the abodes of poverty and misery as the field in which her choicest seed is to be cast, as the proper scene of the labours of her ministers? Within these last few years, since I had the consolation of addressing you before from this pulpit, what a change has taken place in this country! What progress, what advances have been made by our holy religion! Amongst whom, my dear Brethren, have those changes taken place? I can confidently ask this question, and it is a consolation and an encouragement to foresee its answer—not surely among the rich. Among the learned, if you please; amongst the serious and the thoughtful; amongst those whose days had been given to study, and whose nights to prayer; amongst those who had cultivated the severer virtues of penance and mortification; and amongst those who had already cast behind them the perishable things of this world, and had trampled on its honours. Among such as these (thanks be to our gracious God) whose learning had not been merely profane, but had penetrated into the deep stores of sacred letters, our holy religion has made great progress. But they were men unknown for their wealth, or worldly prosperity: they were not merchants who had reared large fortunes—they were not nobles who possessed broad lands. No,

comparatively, scarcely one of these has joined our Church. There are a few exceptions, as if to show that the power of grace was quite sufficient to overcome even all those obstacles to truth—a few bright exceptions indeed—but barely sufficient to show how few have been gained to our Church out of the vast multitude of men distinguished for immense riches, high station, and reputation of extraordinary worldly wisdom. How few statesmen, how few men of science, how few of great literary fame! On the contrary, it has been the boast of those who have reviewed, with unfriendly feelings, our past success, that it has been in great measure confined to such as are less instructed, and less highly educated, with the exception of those earnest minds and devout affectionate spirits, to whom I first referred. But, in the mean time, among the poor, the despised—the little ones of the Gospel—Oh there, confessedly, our harvest has been great. There it is that the labourers of Christ have reaped in gladness what they had sown in tears: and thence have they brought full sheaves, exulting, into the House of God. And does not this, my Brethren, console you? Is it not a happiness to see in this, not only an evidence of the power of our Church, which can reach, with salutary influence, the great mass of the people, and kindle faith where it is independent of mere intelligence, but still more the proof that, with her, rests the inheritance of glorious promises, that “the poor shall eat and be filled,” (Psalm xxi. 27,) and the representation of Him, who, after enumerating, for the disciples of John. His

many glorious miracles as proofs of His divine mission, wound up the catalogue by this, as the crowning evidence over all—"and the Gospel is preached to the poor?" (Matt. xi. 5.) How like is she to Him, who in His teaching was despised, because He was the son of a carpenter, or because He had not learnt human letters, or came from Galilee; or because He was the companion of fishermen, and the friend of publicans and sinners!

And that even further than this, she should be proved to bear the reproach of Christ and His apostles, how common has it been to point the finger of scorn, even against those who form the exception in favour of worldly wisdom, among our converts; and when no other reproach could be cast upon them, seek to throw doubts upon the soundness of their understandings, or proclaim to the world, as the scornful Roman did of St. Paul, that "too much learning had made them mad?" (Acts xxvi. 24.) Yes, my Brethren, this has been a common ground whereon to discredit the testimony of those whom the world itself might have been expected to value, as supported by qualities, which on other subjects it knows how to prize. And, in general, how has it honoured all such as have despised temporal advantages, and have made generous sacrifices of comfort, fame, and still higher attachments, except by its ridicule and contempt? They, whose conduct, on the score of conscience, ought to have won the admiration of all, even of those who were not convinced of its necessity, have been, instead, spoken of as

fanatical or weak minded men, just as the Christians of old were, by the heathens who could not understand the preference of unseen and distant happiness to present enjoyment, or the duty of suffering now, that we may rejoice hereafter. Instead, therefore, of grieving at this, while we fully sympathise with those generous sufferers, let us rejoice at the proof here given us, that our holy religion is not the world, nor of the world, but its antagonist, and subject to its scorn and contempt.

Let us, again, consider the manner in which our blessed Redeemer acted when forming His school of disciples and apostles, that is of men who should separate themselves for ever from the world, who should be, like Himself, poor in spirit and in deed, continent and chaste, men of prayer and divine contemplation, as well as of zealous activity in doing good. He spoke to them but very few words: "Follow thou me" expressed the command to be and undertake all this; and upon first hearing it, men left their homes, their trades, and their parents to become His faithful followers even to death. What did the world think of such conduct? Its sentence has been spoken by the mouth of the apostate Emperor Julian, who perhaps more than any other man has been entitled to be the mouth-piece of that worldly wisdom, which ridicules the simplicity of the Gospel. He has laughed to scorn the implied folly and inconsiderateness of those who obeyed such a call, and cast away every present

advantage upon so slender a ground.* And does not the wisdom of this world as much deride the simplicity of those, who, in obedience to a similar call, renounce station and domestic comforts to embrace a religious or monastic life, that is, to practise all that formed the sum of apostolic perfection, by obedience, chastity, poverty and prayer? And what shall we thence conclude, but that, on the one side, the world still holds that wisdom, which before God is foolishness, and on the other, our Church still represents that little Church of the apostles against which the world cast its scorn, and possesses yet, as its inheritance, that heavenly wisdom which the world reputes folly?

Again, my dearly beloved Brethren, consider the season upon which we are now entering. We begin this day, forty days of fast, of humiliation, and of retirement, as far as our means will permit us, in order to mourn over our sins, and to give the sympathy of affection to the sorrows and sufferings of our blessed Redeemer's passion. But only look at the vast multitudes that surround us: what do *they* think of the suggestions of this holy season? How do they treat those whom they find really obedient to the observance of them? Is it not generally as foolish and deluded men? Perhaps indeed as persons who put their trust in merely empty observances; if they go so far in their reasoning, they may say that it is

* S. Hier. Comment. in Matt. i. 9.

exceedingly simple and stupid to believe that such practices can, by any possibility, do good to the soul, or give any pleasure to God ?

Or rather, without so much reasoning thrown away on them, do not such observances of the Church, as her fasts, her abstinences, her penances, and her works of mortification receive from the world the tribute of a contemptuous smile, as deeds of mere foolishness and simplicity, which no man of education and sense will trouble himself about ? And if so, we may console ourselves in finding here new proofs of our Church's claim to represent that of early ages, when similar observances procured for her the expression of similar feelings, from what was then justly considered the world.

But this title will be further strengthened by another consideration ; namely, how, at present, as in ancient times, the doctrines of our Church are treated with insult and ridicule, in proportion as they are the more sublime, and removed from the sphere of human intelligence. Have not Catholics been far more exposed to scoffing censure, than any other class, on account of the greater prevalence of mysterious doctrines in their religious system, and the weightier importance which they attach to sincere assent to them ? The attacks of infidels against Christianity, and particularly those of the most modern school, are seldom directed against Protestant views ; for such men consider the private judgment which these permit, and the avowed indifference of their system to abstract dogmatic belief, a

sufficient safeguard to the claims of human reason. But it is the Catholic severity about such faith, and the objects towards which it is to be directed, that have ever afforded a fruitful theme for their contumely and abuse.

Has not the sublimest and tenderest mystery of our religion brought down upon our heads more scorn, more jeers, and blasphemous jibes, and, with persons of higher feelings, more expressions of contemptuous pity for our credulity and simplicity, than any other doctrine ever has on men of any other belief? And why? Because it rises above the range of sense, and the reach of man's confined understanding. Because it even makes us place beneath our feet the sphere of the loftiest speculations of captive reason, and fix our look on God, and rise on eagle's wings to Him directly, and to His Word, and to His Power, and to His Love, for the sole proof and direction of our faith. Because belief such as this in a manner anticipates the state of blissful intuition, wherein God is seen in His own light, without the dull glass of sense between: and to men who live only in the body, the unseen things of God are a dream, and almost a terrible shadow; and they shrink from imagining that they may be so near Him, and He so present to them. And hence in the bitterness of their unbelief they scoff at the thought, and almost taunt Him with want of power to do what He has said He would do, murmuring and crying out: "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Psal. lxxvii. 19); or, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

(John vi. 53,) or, “unless I shall see, I will not believe.” (Ib. xx. 25.) Yes, because of the sublimity of this great mystery it is derided, and we who hold it, with inmost affection, are well-nigh treated as fools.

Again, Catholics are taunted bitterly with supposed folly, for believing that they live in constant intercourse with beings of a brighter sphere; because they think they have, as associates in their prayers and worship, those blessed spirits who enjoy the unspeakable happiness of seeing the face of God. Because they still love and reverence those whom the world has long since forgotten, if it ever knew their worth—the holy martyrs who of old sacrificed their lives to the scornful cruelty of the world, which hated faith—austere hermits, who chose desert cells for their abodes of penance—virgins who fled from home and the pleasures of the world to serve their Spouse in solitude and mortification—and holy men of all classes who despised the world because of its folly, vanity, and deceit—and Her, most especially, in whom alone love for the Son of God was not an acquired gift, but absolutely an instinct of her nature. Yes, we are despised in proportion as we realise that communion of saints, which many, in words, profess, besides ourselves. The more we believe that those holy and glorious spirits of the Just made perfect are in habitual intercourse with us by prayer, sympathise with us in our struggles, form but one Church with us and one body, and the more vividly we express these convictions in earnest and feeling addresses,

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speak and act regarding them with the simple truthfulness of ordinary affection, the more we are looked upon as mere idle dreamers, and fanciful visionaries, who create for ourselves a mere ideal world—nay, who thereby trench on the duty which we owe to God. With what bitter scorn has the cruel epithet “idolatrous” been constantly added to the contemptuous name, so long given to Catholics in this country!

In fact, my Brethren, every doctrine which departs from the ordinary beat of human judgments, and supposes a secret and mysterious agency, has been made a ground for taunts and reproaches against the simplicity of our faith. That we should believe in a merciful communion between the spirits of the departed and ourselves on earth; that we should repose with humble confidence on the absolution from sin of God’s priests; that we should attach real importance to outward acts, as interiorly and invisibly efficacious, to blessings, consecrations, anointing, sprinkling, or as evidences of inward feelings and outward profession, such as are all rites and ceremonies, bending of the knees, processions, making the sign of the holy cross, on ourselves, or over other persons and things; that we should easily believe in records, or evidences of wonderful actions or miraculous occurrences, should revere what represents them, or reminds us of them, religious emblems, relics, holy places: all these peculiarities of the Catholic religion are impugned, nay, blasphemed with infinite scorn by thousands, not because they think them unscriptural, or trouble themselves about their proofs or meaning, but because

they are so different from what the world uses or likes. They are deemed evidences of credulity ; they are pronounced fond, foolish, childish ; and they who hold, or do them, are held to be the dupes of a crafty system, and to have resigned the control over their own judgments. And there is nothing which the world despises more than simple faith.

Again, I ask you, ought we not to feel, that we have received from our fathers a precious inheritance in those very things which the world calls folly ? We ought indeed to rejoice at finding ourselves in the same position as they held, and so being able, age by age, to trace our history, through the world's reproach, to the apostolic times.

But might it not then be feared, that this mark would fail us, were the great object of our earnest wishes to be accomplished, by the conversion of all to our holy religion ? Oh that the day were near, my Brethren, when we might begin to consider this as a practical objection ; when we could say, the world has been overcome, and the Church of God sees and knows none, save those who love and honour her ! But fear not : should this joyful day ever come, there will be ever an overwhelming majority of the slaves of this world, who, even while professing to hold the faith of the Church, will despise its ordinances, and seek to justify their own loose lives, by ridiculing and contemning its commands. Even should this enmity cease to form an evidence of the body of the Church, it will hold good as a mark of those who live up to her spirit.

The children of this world will be ever distinguished from the children of light, by the carnal wisdom which will characterise the former in this their generation. (Luke xvi. 6.) Nay rather let us hasten this period, by making our religion respected, admired, and loved, by those who now may dislike and despise it. Let us narrow, as much as possible, the field of the Church's conflicts; that she may cease her contests against error, and have to confine herself entirely to her endless war with sin. And for this purpose it is our duty to exert ourselves to the utmost, to present, on every occasion, the truths of our religion, in all their beauty and all their grandeur, to all who sincerely wish to know them.

It is, therefore, dearly Beloved, my purpose, with the divine assistance, to address you here, twice each week, during this holy season of Lent; with the twofold object of strengthening the faith and increasing the fervour of Catholics, and at the same time of seconding the efforts of those who are engaged in religious inquiry. For this end, it is not so much my desire to give what are generally known as controversial lectures. I will rather select a few topics, not altogether unconnected, and so treat them, as if possible to profit both classes of my hearers. Yet while on Sunday evenings I shall endeavour to keep more before me those who are anxious for religious information, on the Wednesday evenings it shall be more particularly my object to edify and to confirm my Catholic brethren. With regard to the first, I trust that, with God's blessing, they

shall hear themselves addressed without heat or rancour, but in the spirit of Christian mildness and sincerity. For it is my sincere wish to promote love and not hatred ; to draw, and not to force, them into our holy religion, to make them covet and cherish what till now they may have despised and abhorred. And to you, my Catholic Brethren, I will speak with the frankness which becomes the office that hath been entrusted to me. I shall feel that, as a shepherd, I must endeavour to “feed my flock in the innocence of my heart,” that is, in the simplicity and purity of that faith committed to me, which in the sincerity of my heart, I firmly hold and deeply love, and to “lead them forth in the skilfulness of my hands,” (Psalm lxxvii. 72,) that is, guide and direct them with all the energy of one devoted to his work, while this is directed by the highest principles and the noblest motives. I shall feel that I am as a father in the midst of his children, to whom he is bound, by a solemn duty, to announce the whole counsel of God, and to withhold from them nothing that can be profitable ; who will on his side have to render an account for their souls, but who, on the other, may reckon on their dutiful and cordial docility, and readiness to receive his words. Come, then, my Brethren, and induce as many others as possible, to attend here. In these our days of restless inquiry, of longings and aspirings after that which is better, whether it be in mere social life, or in a higher and more sacred sphere, we cannot but hope that discussions upon religious matters will

awaken interest, beget serious attention, and end with conviction of the understanding, and conquest of the heart. Catholic truth requires nothing more than to be clearly expounded, to be shown in its simple beauty. I can hardly doubt but that many who this evening differ from us, by attending to this course, will be drawn towards the Church, and that not a few will ultimately love and embrace it. But, on the other hand, it is rather astonishing that amongst us—in a people possessing powers of discrimination in other respects—there should be such a dulness (for we cannot call it by any other name) with regard to religious truth: such an indifference to the striking characteristics whereby one would suppose it could be distinguished, at the first glance, from error—so little power of applying to it those same principles with which we are familiar, when considering matters of much lower estimate and interest. We may, indeed, with justice appeal, in this matter, not to the higher religious feelings of our countrymen, so much as to their common sense, as applied to subjects of an analogous, though very inferior, nature. We may perhaps more safely speak to them, not as of a question of conscience, not as of an investigation in the consequences of which their eternal destiny is seriously involved, but as one in which their very national principles and mode of reasoning ought to guide them aright. In truth, we might thus boldly and earnestly address them :

“ Remember who you are. You are the descendants of a great and noble race ; you are the children of

wise and holy fathers. They have placed you in a position that claims your special gratitude and admiration for them. While the entire world is agitated by fearful storms, and trembling in convulsions, as though of a general earthquake, you stand secure, and look on in peace ; not merely because of your insular position, not only because of the rocky belt which girds your happy land ; but much more, through those ramparts which your fathers built around you, in those splendid institutions, political and social, which they planned, erected, and secured to you. The same hands built them as planted your venerable oaks in the soil of their monastic demesnes (which as yet they reproachfully point out) ; and both have grown together in size and beauty and nobleness of aspect, through succeeding ages, have stood together the fury of the storms, for a thousand years ; nay, seem to have been thereby but driven deeper into the soil, so congenial to their growth. But beware lest that wisdom which you have shown to all the world, by the care bestowed on the preservation and development of your social institutions, and your pride and boast thereof, be turned into a reproach, when compared with your mode of dealing with religious interests ; and you may be held up to the nations as a proof of how truly ‘the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.’

“ You boast, for instance, that while every other nation seems still engaged in inquiry and search for the best form of government, and is now busy framing new laws and institutions, and still involved in changes

and its perils, in experiments and their anxieties, you are in possession of a well-digested constitution, stable and venerable from age ; which, though from time to time reformed and purged of abuses, still, in its great features and fundamental principles, has remained, and promises to remain, unchanged. And yet you boast, on the other hand, of having a religious system, the very name of which proves it to be but of modern creation. You glory in the newness of that which is, of its own nature, most stable ; and despise, or even ridicule, those who claim as a test of religious wisdom and truth, the very principle which you apply to secular institutions : as though it were a proof of human wisdom to be steady and unchanging, but a characteristic of the divine, to be mutable and unsettled—as if the work of man had to be distinguished by its durability, that of God, by its easy fall !

“ You pity the men of those countries, because instead of being able to attend to the ordinary business of life with regularity and calm, instead of having their time engaged, as it should be, by the discharge of their plain duties, their attention is distracted, and their minds are necessarily occupied, by the necessity of taking part in discussing new theories, deciding upon each proposed special enactment, and trying to settle to what party they shall belong, or what form of government they shall favour and support. And you are grateful, that now-a-days with you, such irksome and distressing duty belongs no more to the individual, but has been long since discharged for you ; while you may steadily pursue the obligations

of your calling, and practise rather than build theories. Yet you cannot see how similarly contrasted are the situations, on the one side, of those who have to make up their minds as to what doctrines they shall hold, or what form of religion they shall adopt, and have to pass through all the anxieties, harassing doubts, and racking cares of so responsible and awful an individual inquiry; and, on the other, of those whose faith is settled, whose creed is fixed, whose Church is chosen, and who have to occupy themselves, not with abstract investigation, but with the fulfilment of their law, the discharge of their duties, and the practice of a settled religion.

“ You admire the judicial institutions of your country, not so much because they differ essentially from those of other kingdoms (many of which have copied them), but because, in consequence of their long establishment, they have formed a steady deposit of well digested decisions, which, handed down from judge to judge, form a better and more comprehensive rule of equity, than could the rigid and unbending formulas of a mere written code. And so of legislative enactments, you know the advantages of a living power, which can modify and adapt to circumstances the statutes of former ages. And yet you protest, as against an abuse, against that principle of our Church, which admits of traditionary teaching, delivered carefully down from pastor to pastor in the Church, embodying the results of magnificent councils and learned investigations, and the development of the disciplinarian code, which, while they adorn, pre-

serve and secure, the kernel of doctrine round which they have collected. And you cannot see, or you refuse to recognise, in the spiritual kingdom of the Church, the infinite advantages of a living authority, which can decide new controversies, explain obscure points, and introduce such new enactments, as may meet the varying wants of the faithful.

“Again, you glory, not unreasonably, in the grandeur and boundless extent of your Empire, unequalled in the world’s history. You favourably contrast your country with vast and powerful neighbouring kingdoms. You boast that no one boundary line surrounds its territory, as though it were the estate of some great noble ; but that your dominions extend to the islands of the west, and the vast continents of the east. From place to place your ships can find harbours to shelter them, beneath the flag of your own Sovereign : and British laws sway mildly the tribes of many distant lands. And yet you would not have the Church of Christ be even commensurate with an earthly empire ! You will not believe that the kingdom which rules from sea to sea, and has for its possession the ends of the earth, from east to west and from north to south, is the same kingdom mentioned in prophecy, as first a little stone cut marvellously from the rock, and increasing till it became a huge mountain, covering, and swallowing up in itself, all the kingdoms and empires in the world ! (Dan. ii. 34.)

“Will you not then reason in regard to the Church of God, at least as you would in regard to your temporal estate ? If not, is it not a proof, my dear

Brethren, that indeed the wisdom of this world is so completely foolishness with God, that even they who are the most wise according to earth, know not how to reason upon things that belong to a higher and a better kingdom? Is it not true that the children of this world are truly wise in their generation, in the application of their sound judgment to the things below, but utterly fail when they attempt to apply it to the things of God?"

Let us then endeavour, my dear Brethren, during this holy time, by prayers to Almighty God, the Giver of all good gifts, to draw down a ray of Heavenly wisdom upon ourselves, that our efforts here may be successful; and that the light of divine inspirations, which come from Him alone who is the sower of chaste counsels in the breast of man, may shine upon us all. Let us earnestly pray to Him that he will deign to second my humble efforts; so as to further His own most gracious views, and spread the sacred doctrines of His holy Church. And oh! may these instructions, delivered in simplicity and sincerity, and, as I earnestly hope, received with kindness, and teachableness, and humility of heart, promote our mutual interests; that I, on my side, may see growing up in your hearts those blessed virtues which, by God's grace, are dispensed to all who sincerely desire them, and that you, on your side, may receive those blessings which God will not fail to bestow upon you, if you be not only hearers of the Word, but likewise doers. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

AT PRESS, TO BE READY IN A FEW WEEKS,
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TO THE RIGHT REV. NICHOLAS WISEMAN,
BISHOP OF MELIPOTAMUS,

The Canons and Decrees

OF THE

SACRED AND CECUMENICAL

COUNCIL OF TRENT,

CELEBRATED UNDER THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFFS,

PAUL III, JULIUS III, AND PIUS IV;

TRANSLATED BY

REV. J. WATERWORTH:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

ESSAYS ON THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL.

PREFACE.

MANY years have elapsed since the Editor of this work formed the design of publishing a translation of the General Councils. The advantage, or necessity, of studying the Councils, as one of the chief records of the faith, morals, and discipline of the Church; as the main basis and exponents of canon law; as containing much of the history of the Church and of heresy; and finally, as forming part of that deposit of doctrine and practice, which so many are called upon to receive in the Profession of Faith of Pius IV; furnished motive enough to regard the undertaking as one of importance and general utility. It was also thought, that a work of this class would be acceptable and advantageous, not only to the ecclesiastical student, but also to all who may wish to make themselves acquainted with the real doctrines of the Catholic Church; as stated and defined, not by individuals, but by her assembled prelates, secured from error, in matters of faith, by

the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, when thus representing in Council the entire Church of God.

The Council of Trent has been first prepared for press, because that Council is of more immediate use for the present times; the errors of the innovators of the sixteenth century are there condemned, and the Catholic doctrine is there also stated, on the chief points which still unfortunately separate so many from our communion; and also because the decrees of discipline and reformation, published by that Council, embody the leading principles of canon law, by which the government and polity of the Church are, in a great measure, now regulated.

This latter consideration weighed much with the Editor, in inducing him to proceed at once with this last of the general Councils. The times were said to be ripe for a restoration, in this country, of the ordinary discipline of the Church, as regards bishops and clergy; or, at all events, it appeared to many, that the day could not be far distant, when such a consummation must be looked for; and when, therefore, it would become, or was becoming, necessary, to enable all, readily and easily, to study the new duties and rights which they would, perhaps soon, be called upon to exercise.

It only remains to notice such details, in the execution of the work, as may be thought likely to interest the reader.

1.—The edition of the Council used, is Le Plat's Copy^(a) of the authentic edition, published in Rome, in 1564.

2.—Neither time, nor labour, has been spared to render the translation as faithful a transcript as possible of the original; the most minute accuracy being essential to the value of a work of this character. Hence, the translation will be found to be a literal, and, as far as was attainable, a verbatim representation of the words of the Council; and where those words seemed, either susceptible of a somewhat different rendering, or to convey some slight shade of meaning not capable of being reproduced in our language, they have been uniformly placed in the margin.

3.—Many notes, and especially numerous references to previous Councils, had been prepared, to elucidate the meaning of the Council; but, after much reflection, they have been almost entirely suppressed.

(a) Antwerp, 1779. This edition is very valuable, on account of its vast mass of various readings; and the catalogues of the Fathers present at the sessions. One or two of these lists will be found, in an Appendix, at the close of this volume.

for fear of infringing on a wise and extensive prohibition issued in the Bull of Confirmation, against glosses, and other such attempts at illustrating the decrees of the Council. Such, then, is the general character, or what it has been the Editor's endeavour to render the character, of this the first translation (a) of the Council of Trent into the English language; but should any passage, or word, be discovered, or be thought, to be less accurately translated, than might be wished, the translator will feel grateful to have the place pointed out to him, that he may give the suggested emendation a candid consideration, and adopt it if advisable.

4.—To the canons and decrees are prefixed two historical essays. The first of those pieces treats of the causes and events which immediately preceded and occasioned the convocation of the Council; whilst the second is a connected narrative of the proceedings of the assembled prelates and theologians, preparatory to each session. The one gives the history of the times; the other of the Council: and the second essay especially will, it is believed, be found useful in elucidating many phrases and canons, and in fixing the meaning of passages and decrees which might labour under some obscurity, if considered only as they stand in the text. In fact, without an intimate acquaintance with the debates in the congregations, which prepared and preceded the public sessions, it would be difficult, or impossible, to form a just and an accurate judgment, on the form of words used in several of the most important decrees, especially of discipline and reformation.

In compiling both the external and internal history of the Council of Trent, continued use has been made of the noble work of Pallavicino(b); and as nearly all the leading facts and statements are derived from that authentic record, it has not been thought necessary to load the margin with references; almost every important circumstance, narrated in the essays, being capable of being confirmed by reference to that work.

(a) An anonymous translation appeared in 1687; but it is so unfaithful, and even ludicrously absurd, that it must be regarded rather as a burlesque than a translation of the decrees.

(b) *Istoria del Concilio di Trento*, Roma, 1657.

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