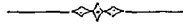


persons' lives, which in the same circumstances would appear to be full as strange." There, as Bishop Fitzgerald shows, we have the germ of Archbishop Whately's clever *Historic Doubts*, and the same idea is worked out by Dr. Johnson, in his denial that Canada had been taken, which he said he could support by good arguments.

It is time to conclude. There is always a temptation to those who are connected with a great cathedral to dwell too much upon the temporary connection which men like Hooker and Pearson, Barrow and Butler, have had with a foundation which still, however, possesses a life and distinction of its own. Cathedrals may, for all we know, undergo great alterations and be subjected to many changes. But if the list of canons and prebendaries is still to receive additions, it is devoutly to be hoped that some few at least may emulate, if they do not possess, the quiet confidence which Hooker felt in the future of the English Church, the intense faith and clear logic of Pearson, the complete control and mental vigour of Barrow, and the patient, humble, truth-loving, peace-seeking spirit of Butler.

G. D. BOYLE.



ART. VI. — BROTHERHOODS, GUILDS AND CONFRATERNITIES.

THE suggested revival among us of brotherhoods, confraternities and other bodies more or less derived from, or connected with, the monastic system, cannot but be regarded with anxiety even by those who are ready to merge every difference of plan or opinion in the endeavour to solve the great problem, "How are the masses of the population which have so far outgrown the ordinary appliances of the Church to be brought under its influence and allured to its communion?" It is generally assumed (though it has never been satisfactorily proved) that the parochial organization has so entirely failed, as to render its extension in any form, or even its adaptation to the altered circumstances of the Church, altogether inadequate to so vast a work; and that we must at once adopt the system of communities, brotherhoods and corporate organizations, regardless of the experience of the past, and looking only to the circumstances of the present need and the dangers which are threatening us in the future. We are beginning already to hear of vows or promises in

ominous affinity to the threefold vow of the monastic system. Nevertheless, we are bound to divest ourselves of every prejudice or prepossession, and to examine the question on its merits.

Though the wonderful history of monachism is full of lessons of warning and revelations of danger to all its students, it is full, also, of marvellous teachings and encouraging proofs that Christianity may, at certain periods and under certain conditions, derive as much benefit from corporate as it does from individual action, and that the one may supplement the other without coming into rivalry or antagonism with it. Those who regard all corporate action as incompatible with the parochial system, should call to mind the fact that before the Reformation every parish in the kingdom had its guilds and confraternities associated for various spiritual purposes, working in harmony with the parochial clergy, and endowed by pious parishioners, in whose wills, and in the confiscatory records of the augmentation office, they have left perhaps the only trace of their existence. In the final crash which came upon the monastic system, and by the confiscation of the little gifts which had hitherto supported them, on the pretext of their superstitious use, these institutions which were spread as a net-work over the Church disappeared altogether, and the parochial system was left without any of those helps which such associations of laymen could alone give it. They had two great and distinctive features which secured them from the dangers of the monastic system :

I. Freedom from the obligations of the threefold oath of poverty, celibacy and obedience ; and

II. A purely lay constitution, which enabled them to assist in parochial work without coming into antagonism with the clerical body.

It would appear, however, that the plans of combination which have been hitherto proposed involve a clerical rather than a lay brotherhood ; and the reintroduction in some modified form of the threefold oath which placed monachism in so early an antagonism with the first principles of Christianity.

The wisest of the founders of that great institution did not enjoin oaths or obligations of this kind on those who entered their order. The reception of a monk in the Benedictine rule involves only the promise "that he will remain firm in his resolution, in his conversion of life, and obedience before God and His saints," a promise which he is required to write out and sign (Reg. Bend. lviii.). The three obligations of obedience, poverty and chastity appear, even in the rule of St. Francis,

only as a law and not a vow: "Regula et vita istorum Fratrum hæc est," etc. In order to reconcile the Benedictine rule with this new profession recourse was had to a forced interpretation of it, and to the omission of the word "stability" which is so prominent a feature in the original. To readmit in any form or with any limitations, however strict, the principle of binding any body of men together by vows or promises equivalent to vows, would be to surrender a doctrine and a principle which every one of the Churches of the Reformation insisted upon as of vital importance, and to reintroduce the most dangerous of the snares and corruptions of monachism. For we ought well to consider what is the doctrine out of which this threefold bond arose, and which, however modified, it involves. It is that there are certain states of life more holy and perfect than others; certain counsels of perfection higher than that great law of perfection which is commended to all Christians alike. There is the assumption that virginity is a higher state than marriage, although the one is a mere human counsel and the other a divine institution.¹ It supposes that a reliance on the ordinary means of grace and help is not sufficient, unless by a vow, often uttered unadvisedly and without counting the cost, we bid defiance to temptation and prove our self-reliance by the same act. The great Cardinal Cajetan, commenting on the words of our Lord (Matt. xix.), writes: "Observe, prudent reader, that no vow is imposed by Jesus on anyone seeking after perfection. For the attainment of perfection does not consist in the chains of vows, but in works of perfection." In the "Homily against Swearing" it is well enjoined, "Whosoever maketh any promise, binding himself thereunto by an oath, let him foresee that the thing he promiseth be good and honest, and not against the commandment of God, and that it be in his own power to perform it justly;" he who does otherwise is said to have taken an unlawful and ungodly oath.

But the promise in this case is not according to the commandment of God, who has nowhere sanctioned it, nor is it within our own power to perform. It has in it rather the *fac quod jubeo* of the law, than the *da quod jubes* which places us under the higher rules of grace; it constitutes a defiance of temptation rather than an appeal for defence against it.

If other societies are kept together by ties of brotherhood.

¹ "The solemnity of the monastic oath," writes Pope Benedict VIII., "was invented only by the authority of the Church, whereas the bond of matrimony received its union and indissolubility from the very Head of the Church, the Creator of all things in Paradise and in the state of innocence."—(Sexti Decret. l. iii. tit. xv. c. i.)

or self-interest, or natural sympathy, without the aid of an oath or vow, how can it be necessary for a religious community, which is supposed to have holier and stronger bonds of union, to add to them one so opposed to its own first principles? A common Church-membership would seem in this case to be itself a higher bond than any subsequent vow, unless the vow of baptism has a less solemn obligation than the vows of human institution. The ordinary laws of a secular association would be sufficiently binding to prevent an undue advantage being taken of the freedom which has been voluntarily, though only partially, restricted. A clear understanding of the limits of the period assigned by the member of such a community to his own residence in it, whether for days or months, or for a more permanent abode, would be a sufficient guarantee against any serious disturbance of the common life, or interruption of its corporate work.

Another condition of the success of such a plan of association is the assigning to the lay element a preponderating influence in its direction and government. The best men among the laity were chosen as the earliest monks, and as long as their influence was maintained the monastic system became a great and unexampled success. It cannot be denied that when the clerical element came into it, and the monks became priests and ecclesiastics, that great decadence began which is marked in all its stages by ecclesiastical historians. The monk in Erasmus's "Colloquies" is made to say: "We monks were originally nothing more than the purer parts of the laity, and the only difference between a monk and another layman was that which is seen between a frugal and good man supporting his family with his own hands and a robber living upon his prey." The clerical element was soon introduced, and the true design of the original plan was frustrated and finally lost.

The best—we might almost say the only—model for an institution of this kind, and one which would give no disturbance to the parochial system, is that presented to us by the admirable institution of Gerard the Great, the "Brethren of the Common Life." These, though chiefly clerical, were associated together by a voluntary pact, and were not required to make any vow or profession. They had as their chief aim the education and advancement of those among whom they were placed, whom they instructed in the work of their trades and ordinary labours, thus laying a foundation for that religious teaching of which the writings of Thomas à Kempis, of Gerardus de Zutphen, and of Gerard the Great himself, present such exquisite specimens. The four rules which

Gerardus de Zutphen lays down for those who follow the religious life are as simple and sensible as those of St. Benedict, and form the last chapter of his beautiful treatise "*De Spiritualibus Ascensionibus.*" The first is, to keep up in all its fervour the resolution and purpose which led to the profession of religion. The second is, to be uninfluenced by the bad example of those who have grown cold in their service. The third is, never to judge rashly the acts of others, whose motives we know not, and whose thoughts we cannot read. The fourth is, not to suffer ourselves to be broken either by adversity or temptation. The admirable rules he gives in the same treatise for private and frequent prayer show how entirely he relied on the grace of God, and how little trust he placed in vows or pledges, which, as our reformers ever maintained, betray rather a confidence in our own strength of purpose and resolution than in the only Power which is able to make us both to will and to do what is pleasing in His sight.

Already in the last century Bishop Ricci, with his synod of Pistoja and Prato, petitioned the Grand Duke of Tuscany to abolish all oaths as unworthy of a Christian people, and to substitute for them such affirmations as might at once satisfy the law of Christ and the requirements of the State. His admirable memoir shows that the question of the inutility of oaths was far more advanced in Italy then than it is in England even now. Yet it may be that we shall live to see even oaths in courts of justice giving way to solemn affirmations, and the privileges accorded to Quakers and Moravians extended to the whole community. But to revive them in a new kind of association, and that in their most dangerous and repulsive form, would be a fatal anachronism—one of those blunders which is said to be worse than a crime. Associations and united action of all kinds in England assume a form adapted to the character of the people, and to the spirit of well-regulated freedom which is the true secret of their success. To fall back from this higher type upon any lower one, especially upon any which belonged to the monastic system in its mediæval development, would be a fatal error, and would at once alienate from the project the sympathies of every party in our Church, except that which believes that spiritual progress is to be attained by spiritual retrogression, and the bright light of the nineteenth century to be put out in order that we may rekindle in its stead the dim and distant lamp of mediæval monasticism. Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, however framed or however limited, with their attendant and perilous system of dispensation, will never, it may be safely affirmed, be tolerated in England. The very suggestion of them has already fallen as a blight upon the

project of brotherhoods, and it is clear that the promoters of such a scheme must adapt it to the feelings of the country as well as to the necessities of the Church, and content themselves with such safeguards for the permanence of their associations as are adopted in every public company of a mere secular character; resting rather upon the higher purpose of the union and its inherent sacredness, than upon any external and artificial support.

But the most important practical part of the question seems to be the relation of the new institution to the parochial system—how the parish in its corporate state is to work in harmony with newer associations having a corporate form of another kind, and of a voluntary nature. The ancient feud between the regular and secular clergy teaches us the dangers which may arise from an *imperium in imperio* of this kind, and the tendency it has to introduce a peculiar jurisdiction supported by the episcopate into every parish—a tendency which so soon developed itself in the monastic system in connection with the Papacy. The diocesan constitution of the Church was soon completely paralyzed by the supreme power of the Pope as head of all the religious orders which depended immediately on himself, and claimed what were termed the “liberties of the Roman Church.” The same fate will inevitably fall upon the parochial system if new brotherhoods or orders are to be created within it dependent immediately upon the Bishops, and not placed in some degree of subordinate connection with the incumbents, whose ordinary jurisdiction they would else supplant.

Yet if the authority to establish such fraternities is assigned to the Episcopate in all its stages, even up to the power of dispensing with vows or promises, we shall soon see, on a small scale but with no less serious results, a renewal of that struggle which has left the parochial clergy of the Roman Church powerless in the presence of the religious orders which have eaten out the very life of the diocesan and parochial system. No individual, however powerful, can stand against a corporation bound together by every tie that can be formed between man and man. The Pope is himself a slave in the hands of the Jesuits and Dominicans, and in the conflicts of the religious orders he is still as powerless as he was in the great warfare between their representatives in China in the days of the unfortunate Cardinal de Tournon. And can we say that our own Bishops are less in a state of distraction and almost thralldom, harassed as our Church is by the almost internecine contest between the two great parties and their respective associations, between whom she is all but torn to pieces? It will be well to see that in the authorization of any

institution such as is now proposed, no additional power is given to either of these extreme parties, and that a *mezzo termine* can be laid down to prevent these antagonisms, which else must become dangerous to the very life of that greatest of all brotherhoods, and only divine corporation, the Church and Body of Christ.

In a sermon preached at the last visitation of Archbishop Sumner, now thirty years since, I affirmed that "the Church was the only tie which Christ Himself formed for us, and that we may say with truth that every other bond of union is superfluous if that be indeed entire." But we have broken this first tie, or at least so strained it as greatly to weaken it; we have rent the seamless garment, and are obliged to mend it with rougher work and inferior materials. Hence the necessity of these attempts to create new bonds of union by the formation of communities within the Church, and hence also the danger of making their bond stronger than that of the Church itself. Our Lord cautioned us in His earliest teaching against mending an old garment with new cloth, the result of which would be to make the rent worse than it was before. We may well lay to heart this divine counsel, lest we make the rents in the Church greater in our very effort to mend them with new materials sewn in by unskilled workmen.

Still less can we expect to mend them by having recourse to old materials of human invention, already worn out, such as are presented by mediæval monachism and its counsels of perfection. This institution failed too completely in an earlier age to enable us to renew it with success in our own. The necessity for it has passed away—the spirit which animated it has ceased to give it life and reality. Even in the countries in which it still lives it is a sickly and unhealthy survival. Its history was the history of a grand ideal system created by great minds and high aspirations gradually merged and lost in the gathering stream of a higher civilization and the developments of science and art, which presented greater miracles than those which were asserted by the doubtful legends of Monasticism.

The masterly picture of the history of monachism drawn by the enlightened Archbishop of Mechlin, De Pradt, compares the course of monachism with that of a river which, springing from a vigorous and copious source, loses itself at last in the sands as it approaches the ocean, instead of bringing to it a stream increased in volume as it reaches its proper destination. "C'est à sa source que le monachisme a jété son grand éclat, et qu'il a eu sa plus grande force. Il est arrivé à son terme faible, aminci, perdu au milieu du monde, comme le Rhin, perdu

dans les sables, n'apporte plus à la mer qu'un tribut affaibli par un long épuisement."¹

Men have now learned how to form and carry out good resolutions without the bond of vows, to associate with one another in works of piety and charity without the imprisonment of the cloister or the threefold chain of monastic life. The determination to remain single for any definite period—to limit one's individual freedom by means of some social restriction, and to contribute to any common fund for the support of the association, needs no other bond than the honour and faith of those who enter it. The "yea, yea," "nay, nay," beyond which our Lord declared every communication would have an evil end, must in this as in every other case be sufficient to secure a unity of purpose in fulfilling the common object, without any recourse to methods of human invention. A vow of holy obedience can hardly consist with the freedom of a willing service, nor a vow of poverty with the civil rights arising out of property which were left by our Lord and His Apostles undisturbed, and held individually for the very purpose of enabling us to exercise both wisdom and benevolence in dispensing support and assistance to those who need. The kind of equality asserted by St. Paul (2 Cor. viii. 13, 14), by which the faithful are enjoined to balance and adjust from time to time the changes and vicissitudes in fortune and property which must occur in every community, by mutual contributions to one another's needs, is absolutely incompatible with the surrender of property rights which the conventual system required, and which so fatally enriched the monasteries as to become one of the immediate causes of their sudden and final overthrow.

It is recorded among the signal instances of "holy obedience" that a monk was required by his abbot to plant a dry stick in the ground, and to water it every day in the belief that it would grow, which he did, even fetching the water every day from a great distance. At last he was released from this fruitless labour, which had given such evidence of his perfect obedience. The moral which we may derive from the failure of this poor victim to an unnatural law is this: that those who plant on English ground the dry stick of monastic life, however they may water it, will find their labour but in vain, and will be led to have recourse to a more healthy and natural kind of husbandry than that which M. About prescribed for the late Pope, "*la culture des ruines*."

ROBERT C. JENKINS.

¹ "Du Jésuitisme ancien et moderne," p. 94.