

Origins of the Roman Catholic Church

GIBBON—(Continued from June)

IV. But the primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues; and it was very justly supposed that the divine persuasion, which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart, and direct the actions, of the believer. The first apologists of Christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display, in the most lively colors, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the gospel. As it is my intention to remark only such human causes as were permitted to second the influence of revelation, I shall slightly mention two motives which might naturally render the lives of the primitive Christians much purer and more austere than those of their Pagan contemporaries or their degenerate successors; repentance for their past sins, and the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the society in which they were engaged.

It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honor as it did to the increase of the church. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. Those persons who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, of grief, and of terror, which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions. After the example of their divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and especially of women, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects, of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection became the ruling passion of their soul; and it is well known that, while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with rapid violence, over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes.

When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the faithful, and were admitted to the sacraments of the church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their past disorders by another consideration of a less spiritual, but of a very innocent and respectable nature. Any particular society that has departed from the great body of the nation, or the religion to which it belonged, immediately becomes the object of universal as well as invidious observation. In proportion to the smallness of

its numbers, the character of the society may be affected by the virtues and vices of the persons who compose it; and every member is engaged to watch with the most vigilant attention over his own behavior, and over that of his brethren, since, as he must expect to incur a part of the common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share of the common reputation. When the Christians of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of the younger Pliny, they assured the proconsul that, far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from the commission of those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society, from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and fraud. Near a century afterwards, Tertullian, with an honest pride, could boast that very few Christians had suffered by the hand of the executioner, except on account of their religion. Their serious and sequestered life, averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in the habits of humility, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends.

It is a very honorable circumstance for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence, the professions, the principles, and even the practice of their contemporaries, had studied the Scriptures with less skill than devotion; and they often received, in the most literal sense, those rigid precepts of

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Christ and the apostles, to which the prudence of succeeding commentators has applied a looser and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zeal of

it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers who, in the conduct of this transitory life, consult only the feelings of nature and the interest of society.

There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former is refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue, and if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single

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Origins of the Roman Catholic Church

GIBBON—(Continued from page 15)

three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, when the chief usher announced the visit of another illustrious personage, Archbishop Poblete. The usher announced him in a powerful voice, and his excellency, in an equally powerful voice, said, "Let him pass into my cabinet." Without much of the usual courtesy, his excellency desired the bishop to be seated and inquired the nature of his visit, expressing his pleasure in seeing the very reverend and illustrious archbishop of Manila at the palace.

Without much beating about the bush on his part either the archbishop said, "Your excellency must comprehend that it is impossible to comply with the order of his majesty which your excellency has transmitted to me. The ration desired from the ecclesiastical cabildo cannot be given to an expelled member of the Jesuits. Besides, it is contrary to the statutes so provided by the church that this should be done, from all of which your excellency sees that it is an order impossible to comply with."

Pallid and trembling with anger, the captain general stood up and in a convulsive voice replied as follows:

"Do all you can faithfully to comply with this order of his majesty, the king. I as one of his faithful vassals, as long as I have power to govern in the Philippines, will never permit that an order of our lord and majesty shall remain uncomplied with. If my orders transmitted to you are insufficient for obedience, I shall find ways and means, even to the sacrificing of my life in his service. I shall not consent to the fact that there are in these islands two powers who command, for it would be fatal to all concerned. I therefore advise your grace to comply with the order you have received. If not, I will see that it is complied with by force. One must obey if he expects to be obeyed. Comply with this as a good vassal of his majesty."

The Archbishop replied hotly:

"I protest against such an imposition! Your excellency understands that we ecclesiastics deserve more respect, both by our office and situation. For this, I pray you withdraw the order, at least for some time." "No!" shouted his excellency. "I will not withdraw the order! That would be rank disobedience and your grace cannot dare to make a joke of the King's order. No, a thousand times, no! The Church of God desires its name to be respected and venerated, and to gain this must respect in turn the orders of the king and not to disobey them. Go, then, and comply with the order!"

"I protest with all proper respect to your excellency, and must place myself on record that it is not possible to comply with this order, illegal and contradictory to the statutes of the Church," reiterated the archbishop. "Go, and comply," repeated the angry governor. "Guard! Conduct this person from my cabinet! Conduct him outside the palace. Today I will see what means are needed for obedience to a royal order!"

One of the palace guards entered the cabinet. Taking the prelate by the arm, after religiously crossing himself, he conducted him out of the chamber. Great drops of perspiration were visible on the forehead of the archbishop, who from age and perturbation could scarcely sustain his footsteps while passing through the antechamber; while the equally nervous captain general ordered me to prepare two royal provisions on parchment, one of these being an order of banishment of the prelate to Mariveles, in case he refused to comply with the order coming from his majesty.

The afternoon closed with gloomy forebodings in reference to these royal provisions. The humid weather gave signs of an approaching storm. To make things more sad, a woman from Ermita, named Praxedes Cuyugan, who looked like a witch, brought the news that a strange sickness that seemed epidemic was attacking the people of that suburb, which the clergy referred to as a punishment from divine providence. The night set in with heavy winds and lashing rains as if nature itself precluded the struggle about to take place—that of church and state. The written orders of the captain general were approved by the Royal Audiencia next day, and I retired quite late to my house after the labors and excitements of the last two days.

(Continued in August)

man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonized would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature. The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected, by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness to the individual, or any public benefit to the world. But it was not in this world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of

discourse as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste, with innocence and moderation, the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and corporeal delight. Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information; and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for heaven was instructed, not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the profane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double

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guilt of pride and of sensuality; a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the Christian who was certain of his sins and doubtful of his salvation. In their censures of luxury the fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial; and among the various articles which excite their pious indignation we may enumerate false hair, garments of any color except white, instruments of music, vases of gold or silver, downy pillows (as Jacob reposed his head on a stone), white bread, foreign wines, public salutations, the use of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, which, according to the expression of Tertullian, is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator. When Christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observation of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy, as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the primitive Christians, like that of the first Romans, was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance.

(Continued in August)

The Modern Muse

Long years ago there sat beneath a tree
A muse, possessed of lovely, winning grace;
Entwined with ivy was her hair, her face
Filled souls of men with nameless ecstasy.
And ever was she satisfied to be
Alone, as seated in some leafy place
She sent a vagrant song through space
With fingers that were light and deft and free.
But now her hair is shingled, and her eyes
Have turned from starlight to an earthy hue;
No longer does she don a classic guise,
But shows herself a *Rhapsody in Blue*.
She does not care to strum a harp alone,
So fashions song upon a saxophone.

—A. R. E.

Just a Word on Shannon's Work in Manila



GEORGE POPE SHANNON

Dr. George Pope Shannon, head of the English department of the University of the Philippines during the past three years, will leave Manila for a similar post in the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque before another issue of the JOURNAL is out, so it is desired to bid him *bon voyage* here, and to say just a few words about his work. He is young, but intensely scholarly; he is endowed with an exemplary character,

unswerving in adherence to good principles of manhood; his personality, his native talents and his educational attainments combine to make him peculiarly fit to instruct youth and inspire young men to genuine effort in search for knowledge.

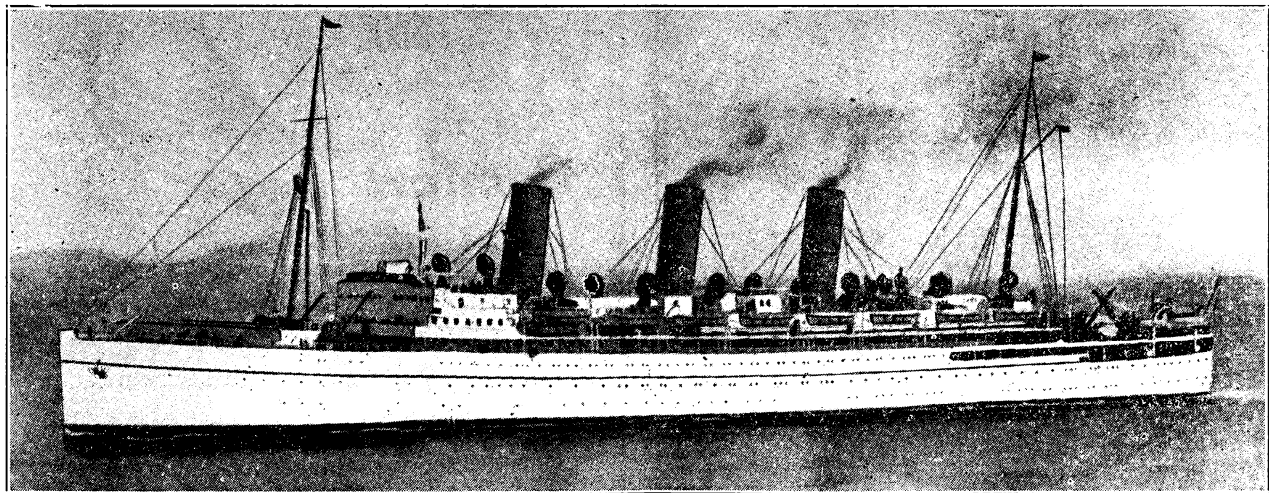
Mrs. Shannon has been with him in Manila, and in the English work at the University; both deserve the commendation they have received, and the friendships they have made and will not forget.

Dr. Shannon went about his task of directing university instruction in English most sensibly. The course is such as that in American universities. Dr. Shannon studied this question, but did not feel qualified to resolve it; so he did not destroy what had been done before he came, but he built upon what he found established. He encouraged his students to write in English, with the result that the grist of English compositions of every sort, from University undergraduates, is more voluminous and of higher quality every year. The University's literary annual attests this, as do the columns of the newspapers on which Filipinos are editors and reporters.

With correct insight, Dr. Shannon introduced a course in Greek and Roman mythology at the University to familiarize Filipino students with the common allusions in English literature and enable them to grasp more fully the sense of their English studies. The new course in medieval literature serves the same purpose. Skill in the accurate expression of thought in English will come of this—in time. Dr. Shannon has the scholar's appreciation of the long way that lies between the beginner's aspirations and the seasoned student's achievements. The permanent value of his deanship of English at the University will prove to be the thoroughness with which he proceeded in all the work, without patience with loafing nor a vain ambition to undertake too much.

—W. R.

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