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The Test of a True Democracy.

By Ven. Archdeacon H. J. Cody, D.D., LL.D.*

At a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 25th March, Archdeacon Cody said:

Mr. Chairman, and fellow members of the Canadian Club,—You almost overwhelm me by the cordiality of your welcome, and by your muster in such numbers, but "How can man die better than facing fearful odds?" (Laughter.)

I do not to-day speak as an expert on the subject of democracy. Sir William Robertson Nicoll, in a recent number of *The British Weekly*, says that the expert to-day is "going about naked and unashamed, pouring out his dogmatic wisdom, so that people are experiencing an inevitable reaction even against his wise counsels." This may be an irrational reaction, but it is real and must be taken into account. I do not, then, speak as an expert, but only as a member of the Club speaking to other members of the Club. I wish to deal with a problem old, yet ever new, and ever confronting us, in the hope that by the effort to analyze it we may gain a clue to its solution.

The principle of democracy may be summed up in three propositions: (1) The first proposition is that the things common to all men are more important than the things that are peculiar to any man. (2) The second proposition is that all men are our own flesh and blood. You remember Mr. Gladstone made that appeal, on one occasion, when seeking to obtain an extension of the franchise to workingmen, "After all, they are our own flesh and blood!" That is the central principle of democracy. (3) The third proposition is that the most vitally important things have at last to be left to the ordinary man himself,—such things, for example, as the choice of rulers. These three propositions are implied in the principle of democracy.

But what will be our test of true democracy? What standard shall we apply to an individual, a nation, or a civilization,

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if we wish to determine whether that individual or nation or civilization has really progressed? The test I desire to apply is simply this: reverence for personality. In order to be able to apply that test, let us go back and contrast the ancient city State of Greece or Rome with our modern State. We shall see the characteristics of that city State, and, by contrast, what has produced the change to the modern State.

The ancient city state was marked by the principle of *exclusive citizenship*. All the citizens of that State were descended from a common ancestor, who in course of time became a deity. They were thus connected by a common origin. This bond in its turn was based upon a religious tie. All those within the magic circle of the city were bound together; there was an organic unity. All those outside the city were under no obligation to the citizens, and the citizens felt no obligation toward them. The ancient civilization was essentially a communal type, as against the present individualistic type; the present life was self-sufficing, in contrast to the haunting sense of infinity which pervades the modern world.

The *domination of the individual by the State* was another characteristic of the ancient city. The citizenship was exclusive, and the individual was altogether dominated by the State. Individual freedom counted for nothing as against the State. The whole range of the citizen's interests and activities was more or less covered by the State. There was no reverence for the person as such. All the actual States of antiquity were founded on slavery. More than that, gentlemen, even the ideal States of Plato and Aristotle assumed slavery as a fundamental institution. The citizens could not develop themselves unless there was this substratum of slavery. Religion had reference merely to temporal blessings and the present life; the rule of law was not separated from the rule of religion.

When we contrast this ancient State with the modern State, we find a growing "dynamic" as opposed to a "static" conception of truth. There is more tolerance. There is freedom of investigation, based upon freedom of conscience, which has led to what we call the scientific age. We are conscious of a great step, a step which we believe is a step forward. What has made the change?

As a matter of historical fact, the change has been brought about by the advent of Christianity. This is not a matter merely of religious conviction, but of historical fact. Here you have the ancient State, its strength consisting in the organic unity of a comparatively small body; Christianity

comes, and extending the principle of unity to its logical conclusion, takes the sweep of the whole world, and sees all men to be an organic unity, because all are linked with the great Creator and Saviour of mankind. That is to say, the brotherhood of man is based by religious conviction upon the fatherhood of God. It has developed and extended the narrow organic unity of the ancient State.

The defects of the ancient State were surely the exclusiveness of its citizenship and the absolute dominance of the individual by the State. Christianity widens the citizenship and gives it a cosmopolitan character. It redeems, develops and consecrates the individual. It lays fundamental emphasis upon personality, it reverences and respects personality, and gives to personality a religious basis. The priceless value and sacredness of the individual is the greatest contrast between the ancient and the modern State, and marks the lengths we have come.

The modern State preserves what is best in the ancient, and supplements and corrects it. The modern State consecrates personality; combines co-operation with individual freedom and initiative, the sense of organic unity with the sense of a contribution which each citizen can make to the State as a whole, independence with the sense of fellowship. It takes up all that is best in the ancient State on the line of co-operation, and supplements it. And it adds the new element of reverence for personality.

Therefore neither "atomistic individualism, nor swamping socialism,"—I quote the words—"nor ancient communalism" can dominate the future. There will never be effective co-operation unless each individual in the State is able to make his own contribution. All must co-operate. No unimportant antagonisms must prevent each from giving of his best. To-day in the course of progress we may need to lay emphasis again upon this factor of co-operation for the very sake of keeping individual freedom, preserving individual initiative, and ensuring that the individual can make his best contribution to the whole. We have always to distinguish between that form of co-operation which smothers individual initiative, and those other forms which are necessary to ensure to the individual his self-expression and his full opportunity of service.

Now, gentlemen, as we have in a brief and somewhat abstract form contrasted the ancient State, and its exaggerated idea of co-operation, with the modern State, we are able to see what is the test of civilization, the true test of democracy,

the true standard of a nation's progress. It is *reverence for personality*. That has been, as a matter of fact, the determining principle of human advance; it will be a guide for us in the multiplex problems of the present day.

This is not a mere academic discussion because the contrast between the Orient and the Occident to-day is very much the contrast between the ancient and the modern world. Practically the ancient ideals and politics are represented to-day in that civilization of the Orient with which we are coming into close contact; and this civilization is taking on some features of our own civilization. Are they taking on the truest and best features of our civilization, namely, those that are created by reverence for personality?

This reverence for personality is a fundamental moral principle. Many of you will follow me back to the days when you sat at the feet of that great prophet, Professor George Paxton Young, in the University of Toronto, and heard him quote Kant's golden phrase on the practical imperative: "Always so act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only." And we remember Hegel's words: "Be a person and respect the personality of others." Lotze, in his "Microcosmos," expresses the belief "that this sense of reverence for personality has been unconsciously the guiding principle in all the moral development of the race."

Not only is this belief the essential and inestimable worth of man a fundamental moral principle but a basic Christian assumption. Not long since, Professor Harnack said: "Jesus Christ was the first to bring the value of every human soul to light, and what He did no one can any more undo." To fail, then, in reverencing and respecting personality is to fail at the very centre of what should be modern civilization.

This principle involves *respect for ourselves*. To break down self-respect is to put a barrier in the way of the progress of every man, woman, child, or nation. Without self-control, no worthy achievement is possible. Without belief in our own unique, indispensable place and function in life, we shall never gird ourselves for high tasks. Without respect for ourselves, we shall have contempt for others, and no basis for our own character. Ultimately a man's sole gift either to God or to man is the gift of himself; and what contribution can we make if we do not value personality in ourselves and others? "We can never expect character or influence or happiness in man or in the race without fundamental respect for self." No man can keep a genuine self-respect if he seeks to degrade

another. Booker Washington expresses the thought in this way: "We have come to know that one man cannot hold another man down in the ditch without remaining in the ditch with him." (Applause.)

Not only must there be a genuine self-respect, but there must be genuine respect for the convictions of others, in matters political, and in matters religious. Fichte says: "He becomes a slave who treats another as a slave." The greatest peril in the use of personal power is the peril to the tyrant's own character. Character deteriorates steadily whenever the attitude of simple tyranny is adopted. Wherever you have "the bossing spirit of contempt"—whether in the church, or in politics, or in society, you have the corrosion and degradation of character. It is impossible to exert a deep influence upon others, to make them good and useful men and women, without respect for their liberty. For this means the calling out of their own will, their own thought, their own consciousness.

Reverence for personality involves not only self-respect, and respect for the liberty of others, but respect for the inner worth, and personality of others. That is why no cynic can ever be a good man, or a good leader, or a truly happy human being. People who are always sitting by and despising life, afraid of being "done," as they say, in the struggle of life, are the men who at the end have got the least out of life. (Applause.)

If this test of progress is admitted in regard to individuals and personal relations, is it not applicable to the relations between nations? Gentlemen, it has often been pointed out that the moral progress of the race, as a whole, is due to the belief, and to action on the belief, that moral obligations which hold for individuals ought to hold for groups of individuals, for business houses, for corporations, for classes, for municipalities, for nations, and for nations in their international relations. No more serious problem confronts us whether as individuals or as nations or as members of a world State, than this problem,—how far are we reverencing personality?

We shall find that this respect for personality may flourish in strange places, under polities not called democratic, and may be signally lacking under polities in which men shout themselves hoarse in glorifying democracy. Not all that calls itself democracy is democracy. This principle does not mean letting everyone do as he pleases, and heeding all individual whims. In very love and reverence for personality, restraint may be necessary, and guidance must be given.

Canada is going to do her work as a democracy. How true is her democracy? There is no power in the mere name. You may remember how it is said that George Whitefield could pronounce the word "Mesopotamia" in such accents that he almost broke the hearts of pious women not a few, who heard him, and remarked that "that blessed word, Mesopotamia was so comforting." (Laughter.) Now the blessed word, "democracy," is very comforting to some people in its very utterance. But what is true democracy? It is that which respects personality, develops personality, and educes the highest personality from all citizens. The democratic tendency is here to stay: we cannot turn it back. As we go forward, there is a call to a truer, higher, nobler democracy, that is, to one which shall be absolutely loyal to this basic Christian conviction of the priceless value and sacredness of every individual person, and therefore will allow no person to be a mere tool or instrument or convenience to another. A true democracy is one that is permeated with the spirit of reverence for each personality.

A democracy cannot make enduring progress without taking moral progress. Its foundations have to be laid in justice for all, and in ceaseless endeavour to bring all to the height of their several capacities. Therefore it is that the future of the Canadian people lies in the future of the Canadian conscience. (Applause.) No progress will be made by any democracy that is not through and throughout moral progress.

Does true democracy mean putting all persons on the dead level of the ancient communism? No! Does it mean the insistence that all men have equal capacities for service, and therefore must be equally rewarded? No! But it means this: "the possibility of a man's life for every man!" (Applause.): —the possibility of each man coming to his own best, and being encouraged by the whole community in attaining his own best. This involves exceptional reward for exceptional service, though this reward may often take the form of wider opportunity for unselfish leadership.

In the future of our own Dominion there will be an increasing number of men who will devote consummate ability not to piling up personal fortunes but to rendering public service. (Applause.)

You may apply this principle of reverence for personality to our economic conditions. In the conquest of natural resources the whole community has certain inalienable rights to conserve. Have we conserved them? Are we pursuing a democratic policy in the use of our natural resources, or is

there too great a monopoly by private persons? Can we combine individual initiative and the development of latent capacity with the fair sharing by the community, as a whole, in all the gains made? Are we truly democratic in our policy of controlling public utilities? Are we so in regard to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few? "Unearned special privileges cannot prove ultimately either an honour or a blessing." Reward should be according to service.

Apply this test in the realm of the social. The great problem is just this: are we going to make the rights of property more valuable than the rights of persons? (Hear, hear.) One reason, perhaps, why in every new community there is a tendency to exaggerate the rights of property, is that we ourselves, or our forefathers, came across the sea largely to better our material conditions; there is therefore a tendency to exaggerate things material. But the great issue is this: are persons greater than things, or are things greater than persons? The real wealth of nations consists of persons; therefore we need to have a more constructive national policy for the better welfare, the normal growth, the wiser and more complete education of persons.

Apply this principle of respect for personality in the realm of education. Is an absolutely uniform method of teaching consistent with reverence for personality? Are we going to get the best results from our educational system, unless there is possible in it some measure of elasticity such as will provide for the peculiarities of the individual? One of the greatest temptations to which we are all exposed is that we should succumb to what one has called the "passion for material comfort above all things." Are persons to be so absorbed in things that personality is no longer to be reverenced?

Some time since, James Russell Lowell, at the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Harvard, uttered these words, as applicable to Canada in this stage of her growth as to the United States of America:

"A man rich only for himself has a life as barren and cheerless as that of the serpent set to guard a hidden treasure. I am saddened when I see our successes as a nation measured by the number of acres under tillage or of bushels of wheat exported: for the real value of a country must be weighed in scales more delicate than the balance of trade. The garners of Sicily are empty now, but the bees from all climes still fetch honey from the tiny garden plot of Theocritus. On a map of the world you may cover Judæa with your thumb,

Athens with a finger tip, and neither of them figures in the Prices Current; but they still lord it in the thought and action of every civilized man. Material success is good, but only as the necessary preliminary of better things. *The measure of a nation's success is the amount it has contributed to the thought, the moral energy, the intellectual happiness, the spiritual hope and consolation of mankind.*" (Applause.)

Note.—I would warmly commend to any who are interested in this subject a highly suggestive and stimulating book by President H. C. King, of Oberlin, entitled "The Moral and Religious Challenge of our Times." I am deeply indebted to it.—H.J.C.