

SERMON BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL.

ON Sunday, August 10, the grand and imposing ceremony of the consecration of the new church of the Trappist Brothers at Mount St. Joseph, near Roscrea, took place under the most favourable circumstances. At the conclusion of the First Gospel, His Grace the Archbishop of Cashel ascended the pulpit. His Grace took for his text:—

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air, come and dwell in the branches thereof."—Words taken from the xiii chapter, 31st and 32nd verses of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

He said:—My Lords and brethren, the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church is, as we may fairly assume, the kingdom of heaven referred to in the text just quoted. Like creation, it may be said to have begun out of nothing. Still, as did the mustard seed, it grew mighty great, by degrees, and assumed at last such glorious and gigantic proportions that it literally covered the whole face of the earth, and brought all manner of men under its salutary influence. It is my desire and design, then, to trace rapidly for you to-day, in this hallowed spot, the birth, the gradual development, the miraculous progress of the Church; to glance at its present position, especially in the great centres of civilisation; to satisfy, as I hope to do, the fears entertained by certain timid souls least an evil world may possibly prevail, somehow, over it; and, finally, to set forth a few solid reasons why, notably in holy Ireland, the further progress of the Church may be looked upon as assured, as its final triumph is absolutely certain. This lofty theme has been suggested to me by the exceptional ceremony and surroundings of to-day; and though I cannot hope to rise to the full level of this great argument, still it may be that I will say some things not wholly unworthy of it, and suited, withal, to the circumstances under which we are assembled here. Our Divine Lord came upon earth, as you know, for a twofold purpose. He came to redeem the world, and, with that view, to preach in it a new Gospel. He was the Heaven-sent bearer of a message of peace, and goodwill, and benediction. They who having heard this message, accepted it, were to be saved; and they who heard it not, or, rather who having heard believed it not, were to be condemned. For thirty years He led a hidden life of poverty and humiliation, the reputed son of a working carpenter; and the last three years He passed on earth were mainly spent in preaching to the people amongst whom He lived. It was not for those then living, nor for Judas alone, that He came to teach and preach. He left the bosom of His Eternal Father out of love for all, and for the benefit of all. Being truly man, He passed away in due time like other men; but He left representatives after Him to carry on the work of His mission, and to perpetuate it. With this view, He organised His followers into a visible association. "Ye are the light of the world," said He to them. "A city cannot be hid situated on a mountain." To this association of men He committed the care of His Gospel and the publication of His law. He taught it to them by word of mouth, and He solemnly charged them to teach it to others, in like manner. "All things," said He, "whatsoever I have heard of the Father I have made known to you. Go, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." He committed nothing to writing; neither did He express a wish, much less a command, that His law should be written, or read by those who succeeded Him. The Old Law, as we call it, was emphatically a written law; and it was solemnly ordained that it should be read for the people, at least once every seven years. And Moses commanded them saying, "After seven years, when all Israel come together, thou shalt read the words of this law before them and in their hearing." Now, in striking contrast with this well-known ordinance of the Old Testament, we find that our Divine Lord wrote no portion of His holy law himself; nor did He instruct any of His followers to do so. Some six of the Apostles, it is true, namely, Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, James, and Jude, did, in the course of time, commit their inspired thoughts to writing, but the others wrote absolutely nothing; and even the apostolic works which we actually possess were composed for special purposes, and, as it were, by accident; were addressed either to a single Church or to a private individual, and were published after a considerable time had elapsed since the Ascension of the Lord Jesus. St. Matthew wrote his Gospel six years after that event, and St. John did not finish the Apocalypse until sixty-four years after the establishment of the Christian Church. The charge, then, given to the Apostles by our Divine Lord was simply to preach and to teach; and so the Divine Commissioners went their way to do the work confided to them, and preached the Gospel of the new Law to all men and nations. Peter went, first to Antioch, and came afterwards to Rome; James went to Jerusalem, Mark to Alexandria, and so on with the other Apostles. They preached the Word of God to Jew and Gentile, and teaching men to observe all things whatsoever were commanded, they baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Such then, brethren, as we gather from the New Testament, was the simple manner in which Christ's commission to His Apostles was originally executed. As He was sent by His Father to preach and teach, so He sent His Apostles to preach and teach likewise. He propounded but one law; He revealed but one form of faith, one code of morals; He established but one constitution, and selected but one set of commissioners to reside over and protect it—that is to say, He founded a Church, and but one Church, which we call the Catholic or Christian Church, and in that Church, as being an organised body, He established a certain form of government. To whom did He confide the power of governing the Church thus constituted? Was it to one man, or to a select body of men, or to the people at large? If to a select body of men, what were to be the terms of this important commission? Were all the depositaries of His power to be co-ordinate in rank and jurisdiction, and if not, what was to be the degree of their subordination to

each other? He did not give the power of governing His Church equally to all; for an association in which all would be rulers with equal rights could have no stability, whereas the Church of Christ is to last for ever. Neither did He entrust it to one individual alone, to the utter exclusion of all others, for one solitary officer, or office-holder would be obviously inadequate to the vast and multifarious requirements of an universal Church. It follows, then, that the society, or kingdom, established on earth by Christ 1800 years ago was originally governed by a select body of men, expressly set apart for that purpose, whose respective grades were distinctly marked out, and the measure of whose delegated power was fully and accurately ascertained. "I have manifested Thy name," said our Divine Lord, addressing His Heavenly Father, "to the men whom Thou hast given Me." The power then directly conferred on the Apostles by their Divine Master they, in turn, communicated to others. When Stephen, the first martyr, and his six companions were selected for the sacred ministry, the disciples brought him (Stephen), though already full of the Holy Ghost, and set him with the rest before the Apostles, and they, praying, "imposed hands on them, and the Word of the Lord increased, and the disciples were multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly." And, as it was in the beginning so precisely has it been during all the ages that have flown ever since the Apostles and their immediate successors passed away to their reward. Priests and bishops have been ordained and consecrated; and through this agency, and this alone, by preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ, the Lord has been spoken of and spread over all the nations of the earth. How marvellous, brethren, must have been the success of the first Christian missionaries. "I give thanks to God, through Jesus Christ," writes St. Paul to the Romans, "because your faith is spoken of in the whole world." "We are but of yesterday," argues Tertullian in the third century, against the authorities of Pagan Rome, "and we have overspread your empire, and left nothing but your temples to yourself." St. Justin testifies to the same—"There is no race of men," he says, "whether Greeks or barbarians, amongst whom prayers and Eucharists are not offered up to the Father and maker of all things in the name of Jesus crucified." And St. Irenaeus, the first and perhaps the greatest ornament of the French Church, speaking of the missionaries of his own time, tells us that "the light of their preaching was shining everywhere." They went on advancing year after year, and age after age, did those early Christian missionaries, until at length, like mighty conquerors, they boldly outstripped the boundaries of the Roman world, evangelised the rudest tribes as well as the most polished peoples, and triumphantly planted the Cross amongst nations over which the eagles of the empire had never floated. The proud but effete philosophy of the day, just as now, sought to check their progress and trample under foot the hallowed emblem which, as their standard, they so proudly bore. But it was in vain. A Roman Emperor was miraculously converted, and soon afterwards the Christian religion was firmly established in the fairest provinces and amongst the most civilised portions of the human race. The Cross itself, so long despised, was now lifted up fearlessly in the light of day. It was raised high in the battlemented tower and sacred steeple; became a symbol of honour instead of ignominy, and the chief ornament in the diadem of Queens, and Kings, and Emperors. From the 5th to the 11th century no age passed by without some new nation being born and baptised into the Christian name. Our own St. Patrick, sent by Pope Celestine in the 5th century, came hither and preached. There was a poetic grandeur, we are told, about the religion of the ancient Irish that made it singularly interesting and attractive. The roar of the tempest was the anger of their gods, the soft zephyrs were their breath; and the lakes, and streams, and crystal springs were but so many mirrors that reflected their face and figure. The disembodied spirits of persons who had fought well and fallen in battle were reputed famous and immortal and supposed to pass into higher orders of existence; but the coward's soul, like his body, was held in dishonour, and his life and death were deemed equally inglorious. What a hold such a system, mystic but manly and impressive, must have had on a warlike and imaginative people. Yet when Patrick preached to them the strange doctrine he brought with him from Rome they quickly renounced the fables and fancies of the creed in which they were brought up, and thenceforth became a faithful and saintly people. St. Augustine and his forty followers, commissioned by the first and greatest of the name of Gregory, preached and taught Christianity in Britain in the 6th century, and is justly styled in consequence the Apostle of England. St. Kilda converted the Fracconians, St. Rupert the Bohemians in the seventh century, St. Boniface, blessed beforehand by Gregory II., preached the Gospel to the Germans; St. Virgilius, later on, converted the Bavarians, St. Gallus the Swiss, St. Adalbert the Prussians, and St. Anscarus, after having preached, and prayed, and wrought many miracles in Denmark, entered Sweden in the eleventh century, and planted the Cross of the Redeemer amidst the frozen fastnesses of the north. The great religious bodies which came into existence in succeeding ages—the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and others consolidated and enlarged the spiritual Kingdom of which the early missionaries had so securely laid the foundation. And so, my brethren, it appears clearly in this way, that the divine commission to "teach all nations," given in the beginning by our Divine Lord, has been practically carried out through the exclusive agency of the Catholic Church, which, even on that account, has a right to be accepted as the only true fold of Christ. Such, brethren, have been the birth, the gradual development, and triumphant progress of the Catholic Church. But now a cry comes to me almost daily, and from divers quarters, that the Church is in danger. Let us hear what this cry has to say for itself. Vice and infidelity, it says, prevail now almost everywhere, and with most men; and that sacred code of virtue, and that body of revealed truth which our Divine Master taught, and put in practice, and of which our Apostolic missionaries were at once the preachers and the living pattern, are held just now in utter disrepute, and laughed at as the very synonyms of imbecility. The atmosphere around us is charged with all the possible elements of social ruin and dissolution. This is pre-eminently an age of thought and of advanced thinkers. Rivaling the folly and fanaticism of certain fabled monsters of old, the so-called philosophers