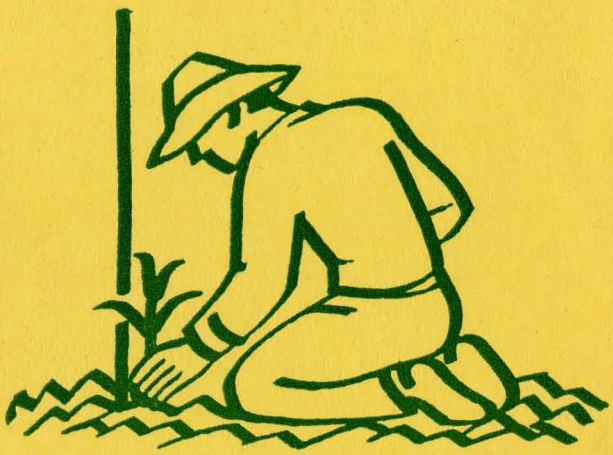
THE CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION OF CULTURE



Vincent Lloyd-Russell

The Catholic Hour

THE CATHOLIC AND CULTURE

By

REV. VINCENT LLOYD-RUSSELL, Ph. D., S. T. D.

Pastor, Our Lady Help of Christians Church
Los Angeles, Calif.

Four addresses delivered in the nationwide Catholic Hour (produced by the National Council of Catholic Men, in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company) on Sundays from July 5 to July 26, 1942, inclusive.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN
Producers of the Catholic Hour
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C.

Printed and distributed by Our Sunday Visitor
Huntington, Indiana

Nihil Obstat:
REV. T. E. DILLON
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:
✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL
Bishop of Fort Wayne

Printed in U. S. A.

THINGS FIXED IN THE HEAVENS
(Meaning of Culture)

Address given on July 5, 1942

In the midst of a changing world, the adjustment of man to life is a necessary, delicate matter. It is a necessary matter unless man wishes utterly to abandon himself to the wayward fortunes of the hour —to sail rudderless upon the seas of life, the sport of wind and wave. And it is a delicate matter because man himself is a delicate thing, wonderfully fair, a union of soul and body. This substance in its adjustment to itself must have perfect equilibrium and it must maintain this balance with unfailing accuracy when it is brought into relations outside itself—with the world at large.

The history of the human race is the history of the struggle for an adjustment of life—the search for a canon, rule, or norm to guide it in the tremendous varieties of its experience—to give it stability against the fluctuations of fortune, to guard it in prosperity and sustain it in crisis. When this canon has been achieved, a Culture is born and it expresses itself in every possible spiritual and material articulation—in liturgy, in art, in painting, in poetry, in architecture, as well as in the lower forms of technological development.

So it is that when we endeavor to discover the culture of peoples long since vanished from the face of the earth, we must take into account every monument which they have left us connected with their interpretation of the universal realities of life. The spiral design, the cowrie shell, where the spirit of the wind was imprisoned, the wine and food jars placed beside the dead, the Mastaba, the Chiuringa stone, the gothic arch, the taut, nervous line of modern design, all have deep significance in the development of culture. When we read in history of the Decline of Nations and the passing of Empires, which once had shone with dazzling glory and unquestioned power, we wonder how institutions so great and so magnificent could fall. The statue of Rameses looks out upon a lonely land. There are no priests now to offer him incense nor people below to acclaim him. The Nile wanders on by fallen shrines and broken temples. Ankor Vat is lost in the deep jungles and grass is in its holy courts. A thousand monks

once served at its altars. Athena no longer watches the city of her love nor the Vestal Virgins the Sacred Fire. The peoples who builded all these things are vanished and the living significance of their monuments is lost.

"Where, O Kincora, is Brian the Great
And where is the glory that once was thine
Where are the nobles and princes that sate
At the feast in thy halls and drank the red wine
Where, O Kincora?"

Life defeated them all, rather than that they were conquered by Death. In the fundamental adjustment, either to themselves or to the world, they failed. The cultural synthesis was not achieved or was inadequate. They did not take into full account the realities of life or perhaps, having taken them into account, they did not maintain them in balance.

A vital culture may then be defined as the spirit underlying, informing—to use a philosophical term—or inspiring a person, a people, or—and it is possible—a world, in its attitude to Life. The manifestation of the culture will be the institutions, monuments, artifacts, and technologics of the race.

The perfected culture is not achieved without labor because experience is essential to knowledge and no human mind is endowed with infallible intuitive power. The cultural tradition of the Old Testament had to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ because the supreme excellence of the Christian interpretation of Life necessitated Revelation. The perdurance of a Culture depends upon its preoccupation with the fundamental realities of Life.

Over against man is the World—Nature, if you like. Experience shows him that there are certain things in the Universe which are above him and beyond him, before him and after him. He must fashion his life under the shadow of these immutable laws. When Antigone speaks of things fixed in the Heavens, she is voicing the experience of the Greek race—a race distinguished by its reverence for tradition. There can only be tragedy as a result of the incest of Oedipus because he has broken a decree "fixed in the Heavens." The countless years of the life of Greece had demonstrated certain truths. Why they should be so, Antigone did not perhaps know, but they were so. Some one once asked Doctor Johnson what he thought of the Philosophic arguments against Free Will. He re-

plied: "We have free will and that's an end of it." He was relying on the tradition of the Race. St. Paul was speaking from the experience of the race when he said the Wages of Sin is Death. There are those who think that by some dispensation of our age, we will be exempted from the payment of the price of sin; they are fools. The realization of the value of tradition can only come from the study of history. The examples of its truth could be multiplied so that all the books of the world would not hold them. The mark of Cain is irremovable, ineffacable, and the judgment certain.

Signs of the traditional experience remain in the proverbs and adages of a people. When they begin to be forgotten or doubted, the decline of a people has begun. It will be true today and tomorrow as it was for countless yesterdays that a silk purse cannot be made from a sow's ear, or that as the twig is bent so is the tree inclined. The Bible, the greatest document of racial experience in the world, insists that the beginning of Wisdom is the Fear of the Lord. It sounds almost odd today.

The tradition of the Race is begotten from the earliest and most realistic period of a peoples' life—the years of establishment and struggle. These are the times of formation and of difficulty, but survival through them depends upon the practice of hard virtue and simple intent. It is perhaps because men have not yet acquired—dare not acquire—the tastes and tendencies of effete security. When Caesar gives a reason for the extraordinary prowess of the ancient Belgae, he says that they lived furthest away from those amenities of life which tend to make the mind effeminate. Cato, the most upright of the Romans, looks wistfully back to the days when the consular seat was still a camp stool, not a golden throne. He saw the evidences of the coming collapse of the Empire in the abandonment of the pristine virtues, 'the *poetas*' —reverence, it means—and the '*rusticitas*'—simplicity—which, after Cato, Pliny so much laments.

Cato was considered an ultra-conservative by the younger element as was Polybius when he inveighed against the decline of motherhood in Italy. He foresaw the dangers arising from a depopulated land before the invading hordes of the Huns. Neither were paid much attention, but the things they predicted came to pass. They were arguing really from the tradition of the race—that if these things were done, the result would be calamitous and inevitable. But the younger Romans, rich and lan-

guidly cultured, would not believe that any such catastrophe could strike an Empire so wealthy and powerful. Do you remember Byron's poem on Baltazzar's Feast?

"The King was on his throne
The Satraps throng'd the hall
A thousand bright lamps shone
O'er that high festival."

In the midst of the revelry, the hand appeared on the wall and it wrote: "Mene, mene Teckel Ufarshim"—weighed in the balance and found wanting?

Again in these lectures, we will come back to the tradition of the Race under another aspect. For the moment, it is a step towards culture, bequeathed a people by their autocthonous ancestors—generally unwritten but consigned to pithy phrases, none of them exceptionally elegant, like the one I just quoted on the sow's ear.

In the times when these proverbs were formulated, the fundamental truths of life were more evident. As culture develops, and nations make that vague thing called Progress, the essential relations of man become obscurd by innumerable accidental accretions. The Greeks had to add wings to the wooden statues of their gods to indicate heavenly connections, because Athenian life had become incrustated with so many trivialities that the gods and their nature were obscure. But Jacob only set up a stone in Bethel.

The adjustment to life is more difficult in our days than it was for the nomads of patriarchal times. The relations by which we must make an adjustment are the same—fundamental and unchangeable because we have, as they had, the same human nature. The world —I should here say the cosmos—has seen their passing and it will see ours.

One tremendous thing which, to use a philosophical terminology, establishes the antithesis—that is, the other aspect of the world over against man—is Death. I read a story once called the Blue Lagoon. It told of an old man, the boatswain, who escaped with two children the wreck of his ship. They were thrown on an uninhabited tropical island and lived there for many years in the beauty of the land. One day the two children found the old sailor lying face down at the edge of the Lagoon. They called him but he did not answer. They turned him over. From his open mouth there scuttled a crab.

For a moment, this new thing was beyond their comprehension—then came the realization of a force more terrible, more alien, more awful than any they had yet known. Here was something op-

posed to the glory of the dawn, to the heat of the sun, to the rippling of the waters, to the blood running in their veins. An awful force, this Death—inevitable, ineluctable. The proper recognition of it and its import is an essential to the formation of a culture.

In the Christian way of life, the thought of Death is ever before us. Towards it our life is directed because the shadow of it lies long over all our days. Old monks and great saints and good men have accepted this fact of Life and have prepared for it—not in a morbid sense but in the realism of acceptance. And they looked beyond the grave in the tradition of the Race because doubt in another life does not arise until the cultural crisis, when the balance of adjustment is disturbed. There is no dance macabre in Ancient Egypt nor in the Bible nor in Homer. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (*Hebrews* 9:27).

Sometime again we will discuss the effect on culture of the attitude to Death. In our days we almost live away from it. Its ghastliness is hidden under the beauty of ceremonial. The dead body is swiftly removed, there are flowers, artificial grass lest the earth appear too damp, soft music and indefinite thoughts. How different from the procession of the dead Pharoah to the Hall of his judgment. Today, if the truth is bitter, we would prefer a lie. From the thought of Death come many things—the materialism of Despair, Utilitarianism, Hedonism. But we must press on. The death of a young man occasioned these fine lines,

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust
Thou madest man he knows not why
He thinks he was not made to die
And Thou has made him; Thou art just."

I quote you poetry for it is the highest and ultimate expression of the **culture.**

The tradition of the Race moves on from Death to Life—the antithesis and the thesis—the polarities of existence. The spirit within the body refuses defeat. It is too certain of its essence. The world may claim the matter for it is its own, but the Soul, inspiring the Body, belongs not to it. It must go on and find another home—another place. There is no doubt of life after Death in the primitive mind. Ideas may be confused, clouded and uncertain, but the thing itself is sure. The waters of the Nile fall low. They will rise again on the turn of the year. Balder dies but he will live once more. The winter passes but the voice of the turtle is heard over all the land. After

the death of the body, the journey of the soul begins. Men living close to the soil, earning bread in the sweat of their brow, learned this thing and with the inexorable logic of the simple mind they knew that they must so order their lives as to merit happiness hereafter.

Perhaps it is from this thought too—this vision of Death, dread sister of the Night, that the beauty of the World strikes men so strongly. The old Keltic poet, Kaedmon, lay in his humble cell. It was around the year 800 when the Catholic culture was commencing to bind the world in a holy unity. The monk heard the voice of God, "Sing to me Kaedmon, the glory of my creation." And Kaedmon sang for the joy of living in a land of God's design. Listen to the music in an old Keltic poem written by a common poet more than a thousand years ago. It is full of happiness, the joy of the soul for the coming of spring,

"The summer is y-comen in
Loude singe Cuckoo
Groweth seed and bloweth mead
And springeth the woode now
Sing Cuckoo—Cuckoo. . .
Sing Cuckoo—Cuckoo."

Nature indeed was glorious, exultant, vibrant; the Sun arose and bathed the valley in the strong light of the morning. The storm was passed and the Dawn was come. The old man died and his son stood in his place. In the fields with exquisite care, not learned from man or books, the beasts nursed, trained, and fostered their young. The tradition of the Race was spellbound before the marvelous order of the world. And it was written, "In the beginning God created heaven, and earth" (*Genesis* 1:1); and again, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God" (*John* 1:1). Men do not see this thing so clearly now because they do not see the land or God.

These are the realities of life: Death, Immortality, and a world whose architect is God. Many have sought to discard or forget these things. But who can say with what success? Particularly in the last century have men striven to live outside reality in a romanticism of Progress. How tawdry this Progress appears today. And so arise the great fundamental ideas of a Culture. Their genesis is from the least complicated phases of existence. Dawson calls it the Age of the Gods. It may be better to say the Age of Acceptance. It is a first stage—a primeval, not a primitive. Above all, it is in accord with the nature of man and it lays the foundations

for the strength of a people—a race —a world.

Catholicism nourished on these realities grew and flourished in the Middle Centuries, the Age of Florescence. Western Literature of the loftiest kind, architecture, painting, art, attained their zenith and the world was bound with chains of gold unto the foot of God, Whose throne is the firmament, Who walks in the evening air.

THE SOUL AND CULTURE
(To the Image of God He Created Him)

Address given on July 12, 1942

Last week we discussed the forces which form a culture or a people's attitude to Life. When a race becomes a power on the earth, it is due to some superiority which it possesses and—this is important—which it must maintain if it is to endure. A people must be faithful to the spirit, to the dynamic which has given them preeminence; of necessity, therefore, the spirit cannot be alien to the racial tradition. It cannot be artificially imposed or continued because the vitality of the spirit lies in its harmony with the object it inspires. Today many nations have adopted a dynamic of Force. Certain leaders are placing an exclusive emphasis upon physical prowess—a very partial and not the noblest aspect of human nature. Chesterton in his superb poem, "The Ballad of the White Horse" depicts such men,

"The Northmen came upon our land
A Christless Chivalry
Who knew not of the arch or pen,
Great, beautiful, half-witted men
From the sun rise and the sea—

This dynamic born in blood can only end in exhaustion; for man is not body alone and even if he were, no body can sustain an endless struggle. The temple of Janus cannot forever keep open its doors. Among our peoples of the United Nations today, it is the vision of a lasting Peace which sends us to War. Not for the sake of blood or plunder or booty are we embattled, but for a security which should allow us to maintain the tradition of the Race and follow the destiny of our Culture.

Last week we saw that certain ideas must arise in the experience of any people, simply from the fact of living. Also that in the formative stages of Culture, the act of living will involve simple, essential relations with the land and its beauty, with the God who created it and saw it was good, with Death and the subsequent journey of the Soul, with the good and evil life. All these ideas come easily and have come universally from the necessity of adjustment to the World. In the first stage of a Culture—which we call the Age of Acceptance—the essential aspects of life are seen with exceptionally clear insight. In Wonderland, Alice was experimenting with pills which made her arm grow large

and then grow small. When it protruded through the window, the Rabbit insisted that so large a thing could not be an arm. The gardener replied, "It's an arm for all that, yer Honour." In the gardener's experience, the size of that arm was quite an accidental thing. It did not alter the fact that it was An arm which was either large or small. You probably will have observed that persons who live close to the soil have an unusually good grasp of the implication of essential and accidental things. The reason lies in the simplicity and reality of their life. It is a royal prince that discusses "To be or not to be." Autolycus could not understand such discussions. Homer leaves so delicate a question to the gods. It is in periods of decline that fundamental facts are questioned. Historically, it is easy to notice the connection between decadence and skepticism. St. Paul saw the altar to the unknown god in the Agora. Trajan, before death, fears he is becoming a god. Sciolism is born and the middle ages pass. Arnold writes on Dover Beach.

One of the most useful exercises which, in our present crisis, we might practice is the development of a deep reverence for the tradition of the Race. We cannot go back to the past and we have many advantages over it. But it was possible for us to come thus far in our cultural inheritance by the wisdom of our progenitors and their experience.

In the Age of Acceptance, the opposition of matter to spirit, of soul to body, of perdurance to transition, is obvious. The hierarchical disposition of the world is accepted. There is no silly romanticism like Burn's poem on the Field Mouse,

> "I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
> Hath broken Nature's social union."

The world is for man "to dress it, and to keep it" (*Genesis* 2:15), and upon the face of it, he is the noblest creature. The Book of Genesis says, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth" (*Genesis* 1:26).

The preeminence of man is established and his dominion over the lower creation asserted. And the reason of his excellence? " . . . to his own image, to the image of God he created him" (*Genesis* 1:27)—"and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (*Genesis* 2:7).

The hierarchy of creation is per-

fected and the soul is the cause of the distinction. We have somewhat lost this idea in confusions of evolution and materialism. It is imperative to restore it if the dignity of the individual and his liberties are ever to return again to the thought of man—"Thy creature whom I found so fair." There can be no distinctive or lasting culture or security or happiness until the inviolable, inalienable dignity of man in his unique composition of body and soul is again set up, again vindicated. From consideration of this perfection come innumerable cultural institutions, the rights of trial, laws affecting liberty of thought, action, expression, the spirit of the constitutions of the great democracies, and the hate of tyranny and despotism.

This soul of man, unlimited by space or matter, impenetrable and secret, endlessly active, impatient, too, of the cords of body, struggling ever to express itself, to reach a higher air. Plato was swept beyond the world in the consideration of its excellence; Augustine wrote of it in his fairest words. The perfection of the soul is the science of Catholicism. In a modern world, it is made subject utterly to matter.

The soul is the principle, the dynamic of being. It is the source of the imperishable works which our culture has wrought, of the language which we have developed, of the art which will tell future generations of our passing. It is endowed with enormous powers and most delicate faculties, and in God's design, it is encharged with the direction of our bodies, and the accomplishment and maintenance of the harmonies of life.

In the tradition of the race, the Soul is never confounded with matter. After its tenure of the body is over, it will fare out alone. It will not die. Its nature is indicated by its constant struggle for articulation. It is the Soul which moves the artist to impose his sign upon the stone, to stamp upon enduring immobile matter the mark of the spirit, to demonstrate the superiority of spiritual essence. It is the soul which inspires the poet to mould the word form to lofty thought "fretted to dulcet jars and silvern chatter the pale ports of the moon" . . . to deliver itself of a mighty message.

It will be a confused message, like the centaur, like the pedestal at Lucknor. But the tradition of the race will insist that the spirit is not matter.

Full of nimble and fiery shapes, the soul becomes the directive force in culture. It takes the things of its experience to weld them into a scheme of life. Gradually the mind

are gone. They were not a primitive or original state because all peoples are monotheistic in the beginning. They were not an evolution but a devolution. The altar to the unknown god is deserted. The Pantheon is closed. The sands blow around Karnac. The Gods of Egypt and of India are confounded, for over the whole earth broods the spirit of the Almighty Immutable God. Before Him there is no Frenchman nor Teuton nor Briton. He is God over all the earth and the fulness thereof. The Pope in Rome is his Vice-gerent, Father of every soul in Christendom. The ideal of unity is achieved and the tradition of the race perfected.

It was a glorious moment in Western Culture. The common Faith allowed common ground upon which accidental differences—and they were many—might be adjusted. The liturgical act was unique—the Sacrifice of the Mass—offered up to God from the rising to the setting of the sun. It was the common Altar at which all the peoples of the earth might gather in the same "ecumenical" intent—the essential, social, corporate act of worship, understood in its high significance by everyone.

To judge this time accurately, there are two works of the age which are helpful—one is the *Dies Irae*—the funeral hymn used at fixes the essential and accidental relationships between itself and the body and between both and the cosmos. The adjustment is made and the age of acceptance is over. The period of fruition, when the culture enters an age of florescence, of splendor, begins.

Throughout all history you will notice these eras in the life of any people or nation. The walls of the city are built, the Sabines subdued, and the wars are over. There is time to enjoy the arts of Peace and embellish the simple life with the amenities of tranquility. It was so in Rome, in Greece, in China, in India, throughout all history.

Literature will be perfected. Architecture will be ennobled. All the arts will advance in a new concord. The length of the Age of Florescence will depend on how long the tradition of the Race is maintained in purity.

In Europe, the Age of Florescence was attained in the Middle Centuries—1200-1400 A. D. The Tradition of the Race was combined in the synthesis of a universal Catholicism, which added the divine clarity of Revelation to the natural truths of life. The accretions and confusions of unaided reason were discarded in the Christian Dispensation and the adjustment to living perfected in its essential relations.

The animal-gods and nature-gods

Every form of medieval life moved in the great synthesis of culture. The object of terrestrial existence was to make a fit preparation for a perpetual life hereafter. The King was the steward of God among his people—*minister Dei*—Dante calls him in *De Monarchia*. The divine right of kings is not a medieval idea, but an Elizabethan one—a *corrolary* to the Queen's assumption of the Papacy in England. The subject of the King must do him reverence and in all lawful things obedience, but the subject had certain rights through his dignity as a man—a creature of body and soul.

Many fell short of this high ideal of living. How lamentably short it is only necessary to read contemporary documents like the *Vision of Piers Plowman* to discover, but there was one advantage then that we have not now—the nature of sin was commonly recognized and the distinction between right and wrong evident: The tradition of the Race and the fixed laws in the heavens had established a norm or canon of conduct in accord with the rational nature of man. A culture is perfected when it is universally received as in harmony with the essentials of life. The medieval mind achieved this synthesis. It began in the belief in God and proceeded logically to mass—the other, the *Divine Comedy*.

The *Dies Irae* is based upon the inevitable end of the body and journey of the soul. Whether one be rich or poor, mighty or lowly, there comes a day when the difference of station is abolished and the soul must answer for its deeds of evil or of good before the king of all created things—Very God of Very God. The thought established the purpose of life—to live so that they might merit favorable judgment. Whatever the station of a man, it was but a stewardship; and the ultimate judgment was not according to the eyes of men but after the eyes of God, who saw into the deeper heart.

The theme of the *Dies Irae* rests upon so profound a conviction, that the poet is swept into a magnificence of language which defeats reproduction in our tongue. Swineburne, who made a rather accurate translation, does not attempt to translate the lines *Rex Tremendae Maiestatis*. The sublimity was beyond him.

The Divine Comedy is a larger synthesis of Medieval Thought. The soul passes through hell, purgatory, and heaven. It sees the fate of those who refused the soul the preeminence of its nature and allowed the body an indulgence above its rights.

the deductions therefrom. It preoccupied itself with the soul and holiness. A holy man would be a good citizen—an educated man might not be. He might be a very great villain.

Here is a noteworthy difference between modern and medieval thought. We seek to educate rather to escape the consequences of sin than to make holy to avoid sin. The medieval mind was more logical and grasped better the essential aspect of evil.

To the perfection of the soul, extreme care was given. Because of its excellence, it was the principle directing bodily activities, and it should be cultivated so that always the soul would vindicate its superiority over matter. Had we the time, I would read to you a letter of Pope Pius II, on the education of a young prince, which might be studied with advantage today. The soul was the disciplinary force in living. If it was not disciplined, the cord of Adam, of the flesh, might easily bind it to material subservience. Hence the emphasis on sins of pride of intellect when the soul, exulting in its excellence, forgot that it was limited, forgot an inherent weakness and debility. The soul is the *elan vital* of the body; it must also be the *frein vital.* Milton puts the thought well,

"The mind is its own place and in itself,
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

The discipline of the soul is achieved by the practice of the spiritual life—the virtues of purity, of humility, of all those acts which are essential to right living. It is surprising today how much caution has taken the place of purity as a virtue.

From the body, too, there was danger to the harmony of culture. It was of the earth, earthy, prone to passions which in the union of the holy body, might deordinate the soul. The body was subjected to material discipline—hardness of life and mortification. The great saints—like Benedict, who rescued the world from crisis, and Francis of Assisi, who wedded Lady Poverty—schooled themselves in discipline. Like the ancient Greeks, Francis saw money as the curse on mankind from the angry gods.

Thus was the Western Culture founded. The imperfections of the early ages were rectified and a universal discipline of Faith imposed on the entire synthesis. The Age of Florescence was achieved; and it is filled with great names and glorious deeds. Louis of France, Henry VI of England, Charles IV of Bohemia—Innocent III; Fra An-

gelico, Michelangelo—Da Vinci; the roll of their honor is endless, and of their fame who shall tell.

The West had captured an ideal —the Vision of God upon and in the whole world.

THE MATTER OF CULTURE

Address given on July 19, 1942

The body dies and the soul lives; hence the chief prescription of the Christian life lies with the development of the soul. But this body no less is sanctified by reason of the union which obtains between it and the spirit. In the Catholic Culture, the body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, bound in sanctity to the indwelling spirit of Holiness. The sacramental ritual of the Church never omits stressing this high destiny. In the baptismal service, the water will typify the spiritual lustration and the rite will anathematize the evil spirit, ordering him to give place to the Holy Ghost. The body must share in the discipline as well as in the destiny of the soul. It is the matter, as the soul is the form, of culture.

In all the great traditional attitudes to culture, the subservience of the body to the soul is demanded. Not only is it a point of the Catholic synthesis, but it is another fact derived from the tradition of the race, learned from the bitter act of living. It has been found that a people given over to excessive indulgence rapidly decline in power and influence. Nor is it necessary to imply luxuriance in grosser things—a surfeit of the more elaborate amenities of living has produced racial weakness, which when unchecked, ends in complete collapse. Augustus after this fashion, rebukes Anthony,

"when thou once
Wast beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
Hirtius and Pansa, counsuls; at thy heel
Did Famine follow: whom thou fought'st against
Though daintily brought up, with patience more
Than savages could suffer: thou didst drink
The stale of horses and the gilded puddle
Which beasts would cough at: thy palate then did deign,
The roughest berry on the rudest hedge;
Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets
The barks of trees thou browsed'st On the Alps
It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
Which some did die to look on: and all this
It wounds thine honour that I speak it now—

Was borne so like a soldier that thy cheek
So much as lanked not" (Shakespeare, Anthony and Cleopatra 1. IV)

Anthony had succumbed to the siken ease of Egypt and her queen. The shadow of Actium was already lengthening upon him.

The danger to a virile culture is always present. In the first ages of a people's history, the realities of life and the struggle for adjustment keep the peril in abeyance; and the culture maintains a stark simplicity. It is the pursuit of the common virtues of living, purity, temperance, and the practices of charity which erect the culture and bring it to florescence. When it attains its growth, it is in possession of the harmony of adjustment, it is stepping from the dawn to the noon sun and its face is towards the light—unless it can find means to sustain the heats of the day. The power to maintain the culture lies in maintaining the spirit of it in positive vigor. What I have said is not alone applicable to a people in general. It has vital individualistic import. The growth of a man is his age of acceptance. It is his time of training, education, discipline. When he passes from growth to manhood, he enters his age of florescence. He will fulfill the promise of his day but only if he be faithful to the lesson of his youth. "A wise son," says the Book of Proverbs, "*heareth* the doctrine of *his* father" (*Proverbs* 13:1).

The cultural crisis, either to the individual or to the race, arises after the period of formation. The dynamic exhausts itself in the intoxication of enthusiasm. Anthropologists call it the 'cultural lag.' The evidence for its occurrence is historical. We see great nations rise and fall—civilizations appear and vanish, the Burden of Moab, the Burden of Egypt, and the Burden of Babylon. "It shall no more be inhabited forever, and it shall not be founded unto generation and generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tents there, nor shall shepherds rest there" (*Isaias* 13: 20). "And owls shall answer one another there, in the houses thereof, and sirens in the temples of pleasure" (*Isaias* 13:22).

From history it might seem almost inevitable that decadence follows the period of florescence. But it is not a categoric of sequence. It is because no effort is made to preserve the dynamic, the spirit, in eminence. As an evil lethargy, possession begets indolence and s a f e t y generates carelessness. There is a popular phrase, "It can't happen here." There is food for

thought, much thought, in these words.

In Chapter 44, Verse 4-5 of Jeremias, it is written, "And I sent you all my servants the prophets, rising early, and sending, and saying: Do not commit this abominable thing, which I hate. But they heard not, nor inclined their ear . . . "

Always when the signs of decadence appear, there are valiant men who give warning of the peril. The signs may appear slight to the unthinking, but when much is at stake, no care is small. The prophet of course is slain.

In the human composite, the discipline to maintain culture must be exercised in both the body and the soul. In the Christian culture, the sanction behind this discipline lies in the supernatural order. It is this which gives our culture its divine permanence. All the great historical cultures have invoked a discipline to maintain the purity of their tradition—Asoka in India, Amenhotep in Egypt, Laotzo in China, Pericles in Greece, Cato in Rome. Their object in doing so, however, was utilization and, ultimately, transitory. They did, however, realize that the preservation of hard virtue is the best guarantee of the preservation of the race. The Dorian and Phrygian modes will be permitted but the Lydian abandoned. Like the Median, it tends to luxury. The ephebos will be whipped at the altar of the goddess so that he is enured to hardship. The initiation ceremonies of many tribes today have the same intent. The result of this pagan discipline led to an apotheosis of the body and to a coarser, lower view of spiritual values. To Pindar, there is no perfection worth much outside wrestling. The dithyramb of Timotheos supplants the high religious significance of the dance. Materialistic philosophies rise, the noses of the Hermes are cut off and the power of Greece steadily wanes. In Rome, it is the same. Petronius becomes Arbiter Elegantianum and the Gods are scorned.

The attempt to invoke a discipline failed because the sanction demanded for the discipline was not in harmony with an essential element of the adjustment. It is the part of Christianity to invoke the discipline as a means of assisting man—a creature of body and soul—to arrive, not only at earthly happiness, but at Beatitude before the throne of God.

The discipline of the body, therefore, is a part of the Christian way of living. And it is hard because the appetites and passions of men resist restraint. It is doubly hard because human nature in the individual must submit to it, and the individual must again accept it

in maintaining his attitude to his neighbor (the sociological aspect), and to his God (the theological aspect).

The great mediaeval saints mortified their bodies in a manner at which some people affect horror. The saints would have been shocked at the way some modern people pamper their bodies with far more deleterious results. The saints were intent on attaining virtue—St. Francis accepted poverty because his riches were keeping him from seeing the glory of God's creation. He wrote a beautiful ode to the sun. I have never read in modern psychology anything about virtue. I think it is now called an inhibition. But when virtue goes out from the will of the Race, death follows. This is Truth.

Catholicism declares discipline, a necessity for the full perfection of man—and in certain things of discipline, it will make no compromise because they are essential things. Here arises another difficulty of the Catholic life. It is hard and at times exceedingly bitter for the body and for the mind, to submit to rigorous conformity, but this is exactly what is demanded in the realm of essential doctrine and morality.

Unlike the brute creation, which in activity is directed by instinct, man is endowed with a will, to control, curb and keep in harmony the soul and body. In the matter of culture, experience shows him that if he does not use his will to this purpose, bodily indulgence will bring on physical collapse and, because the union of the body and soul is of a nature so intimate, mental desuetude will follow. When a Race abandons restraint in any of its cultural institutions, such as education for example, racial desuetude will follow. "Noble thoughts and noble deeds" was the advice given the neophyte in the days of Zarathustra. The stories of the heroes must be told to children in the Platonic system, to fire them with the desire for noble things.

The daily incidence of sorrow must be used by the Catholic to strengthen him in the day of more grievous temptation . . . under the sting of the flesh as Saint Paul calls it. Bravery may indeed be—and generally is—a spontaneous act but endurance is the result of practice and of schooling. This is what is meant when we say that a culture must be hard. It is also the difference which exists between a cultured person and a sophisticated person . . . between simplesse and simplicite. Somewhere long ago I read a line

"I sat in the school of sorrow
The Master was teaching there . . .

It exemplifies a point in the Catholic culture. Through sorrow and through pain we must arrive at holiness. Behind the Star of Bethlehem, there hangs the shadow of the Cross. There is an unbridgeable cultural chasm between our idea and for example the idea of the poet who wrote

"Come in the fire of spring
The winter garment of repentance fling
The bird of time has little way to fly
And lo, the bird is on the wing . . .

But all that Omar Khayyam could suggest to mark the passing of his days was an upturned glass upon his grave. You will observe one thing, that no philosophic attitude such as the Persian's here endure. The Sufi rose against it as an ignoble interpretation of life and Rabia died, for the value of pain.

To imagine that in this life we can escape suffering utterly is rather childish. The Classic writers declare that no man can be called happy until after he is dead. The Ancient world was very wise but we do not know its wisdom sufficiently. For the Christian the value of pain lies in the acceptance of it as a source of purification. To the materialist pain is naturally abhorrent . . . It is an absolute evil. In some primitive tribes, old people and the incurably sick are killed so that the tribe is not embarrassed with their care. The same idea is not foreign to the modern mind. How different from Saint Paul who asked the Almighty God that he might burn here, rather than suffer afterwards.

For the high vision of God a great detachment from the body and from the lower movements of the passions is incumbent on the cultured Catholic. It is a heavy demand . . . not one founded in servile fear but one proceeding from deep love . . . a love so strong to God that it fears lest anything should lessen it.

In the Hound of Heaven, Thompson pictures the abnegation demanded by the Almighty Lover of Souls

Naked I wait thy Love's uplifted stroke
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me
And smitten me to the knee
I am defenceless utterly . . .

Do you remember once when it was evening in Galilee and Christ spoke to the rich young man? If you would be perfect, give up all and follow me. Peter and the others had given up all but they were only fishermen and had little to give up. The rich and good young man glanced down into the valley. Ser-

vants were working in his fields, knew and loved. Slowly he walked
the home of his fathers and his own down to his holdings . . . a good
lay hidden among the trees, the young man. But Jesus stood the
brooks and the meadow there he while, looking out beyond the world.

THE CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

Address given on July 26, 1942

In the course of these lectures, we have discussed the meaning of culture and the realities implied by the word. In the last two addresses, we noticed the part played by the Soul and the part played by the Body, the two constituent elements of human nature, in the formation of a cultural synthesis. Underlying all these ideas is the irrefutable lesson of History and the experience and tradition of the race.

There are definite stages of development in the cultural life. The formative period or Age of Acceptance, when a people undertake the labor of establishment. This is a time of realism; not realism in the modern literary sense where the word is used instead of "sordid," but a realism which implies a healthy attitude to life and its problems. It is an age involved, if I may use the word, with the soil and with the natural life. It is a time, too, of simplicity of soul. Incidentally, it is a time of idealism and poetry.

The next period is the Age of Florescence, of splendor, when the fruit of a wise adjustment to life is gathered. Finally, comes the cultural collapse or decadence or moribund stage when the dynamic fails to maintain its fire, shows a gradual etiolation and dies. You will easily be able to mark these periods in the history of any race. Innumerable writers of modern times declare this evolution of culture to be inevitable. In the eternal flux of things, the spirit also changes from youth to old age and thence to death.

Catholicism denies the theory that the cosmic evolution categorically demands the passing of the cultural form. We hold that certain truths of their very nature are immutable and eternal, "fixed in the Heavens," and that they underlie the entire superstructure of life; furthermore, that if these truths are ignored, no basis of culture can be found which will sustain adjustment to the world and if any other fundament is used, it will collapse.

The great danger to the cultural synthesis arises at the zenith of the Age of Florescence. It arises from what Saint Paul may have understood as Pride of Life. The stability which has followed the years of struggle begets an assurance, a sense of power in the race. The amenities of living are vastly increased and the hours of leisure multiplied. The creative spirit ful-

fills itself in a new enthusiasm and succumbs to the arrogance of youth.

"In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me: grimed with smears
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap. . . ."

The words I have quoted you were written to express the result of an individual arrogance. With a race it is the same. There is a similar burst of exultancy and a like assertion of autonomy. There is an impatience which resists the bit and would break from the reins. It happened in Greece, in Rome, it happened everywhere. In Europe, it happened around 1500 A.D.

The period in the history of the West is called sometimes the new learning. It was a reintroduction of classic thought and classic idealism. The appeal of all this thing lay in the freedom it promised; a liberty outside of God, of Church, and of morality—a defiance of the traditions of the Race. A point often forgotten is that the New Spirit was borrowed from an Age of Decadence in another civilization and that this same spirit presaged the end of a people.

The moribund stage in our civilization is easy to follow. From 1500 on, there is a gradual decline in the spiritual interpretation of the destiny of man. The individual begins to lose his unique place in the hierarchical order of creation. The more he asserts his complete autonomy, the more he loses it. The more he abandons the sanctions of God, the more confused become his steps. It is the story of Daedalus again, although the scene is changed.

The crucial years began towards the end of the last century. An English Poet, Swinburne, became the high priest of the New Spirit. He wrote his famous Hymn to Man, and of the God Whom he has met these many years past, he said:

"The bow of your Godhead is broken, the arm of your conquest is stayed." For a thought like this, Euripides had Pentheus torn to pieces by Agave. The poem may be used to mark the first rejection in the Western Culture of an element without which no peoples have successfully made adjustment to life. It is very different from the thought expressed by Benjamin Franklin in his convention address at Philadelphia, when he states that the longer he lived, the more certain he became of the Providence of God in the affairs of man. It is a terrible crime to reject God.

The second rejection in the cul-

tural synthesis followed the advance in technologies. Almost every day was characterized by new mechanical discoveries. The open sesame appeared to lie in material progress. An increasing disregard was felt for any metaphysical interpretation of life. Thought had never, while pre-occupied with the problems of existence, discovered a turbine. Tennyson felt the spell of it and wrote, in *Locksley Hall,*

"For I dipped into the future far as
human eye could see
Saw the Vision of the World and
all the wonder that would be
Till the war-drum throbbed no
longer and the battle flags were
furled
In the Parliament of Man, the
Federation of the World."

The soul was relegated to a pure biologic function—the secretion of thought as the liver secretes bile. Religion suffered much the same fate. The part of the Church in the national life was lessened and governmental parties took over the duties of the priesthood. The basis of morality was no longer placed in the natural law, but in the general scheme of evolution. A great new hope filled the world and a sense of freedom unfettered by the shadow of God touched the earth.

The great phrase of Milton which I quoted you before, concerning the paramount position of the mind, was without significance to the new spirit. It was an endocrine or gland which could make a hell of heaven or a heaven of hell. The spiritual part of man was debased to the service of the body.

The evangel of materialism swept the earth. The ideals upon which our culture was formed were discarded. The life of a saint, meditating in the solitude of a cell, was considered a sign of insanity—a victim of the superstition of the Dark Ages.

The emphasis of the New Era was thrown entirely upon earthly happiness, and the abandonment of all restraint. One should live as one wanted to but not as one should. The idea of discipline collapsed. Education and the art of learning were reduced to pastimes. On all fundamental questions there was no sure doctrine. It might or it might not be. Every hope of cultural unity was shattered beyond repair. But the cry still went up to the heavens, "We are free," and the device upon the banners of the century was a symbol of Man.

Then something went wrong with the whole scheme. The city of Man crashed and fell where it stood. The millenium did not come and the Utopia was not realized. The mind, no longer contemplating eternal verities, engaged itself in the pro-

duction of engines of war. The body surfeited with luxury turned to the husks of swine. The individual for whose liberation the whole doctrine was developed, became far less in the order of creation than ever before in history. Indeed if he ventured to assert his claim to liberty, he was ordered to the death.

Thus far to 1942. We are in crisis greater than any the West has known. The traditions, institutions, and ideals by which we were begotten are no longer accepted. The reason that we have not been precipitated into peril before this lies in the dying strength of our sanctions. But they are now in their agony and we must shift for ourselves.

I have said that the Christian cultural attitude was a hard one. I mean that it is realistic. It does not waste time upon romantic notions nor rebel in despair against the apparent difficulties of life. It accepts this world as a time for the pilgrimage of the soul and it keeps always a nice regard for the creatures that we are. Christianity has a rare sense of life. You will not find in any modern psychology a clearer insight into human nature than that you will discover in the moral theologies of the past. At best, you will find a few new names for very old things. There is nothing new under the sun. It is the realization of this which has permitted the Popes to make such accurate prognostications of the future. How clearly did Gregory XVI warn us of all that is happening today.

Whether one be a Christian or not, no one can say that any more beautiful vision of the world has been conceived than ours. There has been none more noble, none more glorious, none more charitable. The Christian soul is swept from the limits of the world and stands facing out to the eternal years. He is not alone. Before him are the holy ones who have fought the good fight, kept the Faith, and stand before the throne of God. He has been consecrated in Baptism unto God, elevated above brute creation. He is in a militant sense sanctified to the communion of Saints. And beside him is his brother, like him, a holy thing in God's design. And this almighty Lord hath given him free will to order and direct his mortal life in holiness.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

Again we may reflect on the matter of holiness. It is the result of discipline of the mind, to prevent it from illogical aberrations, and of

the body, to keep it from a purely animal life. It is perfected in the exercise of virtue and in the practice of restraint. Outside the churches now, few speak of holiness —none of restraint. Yet if these things be forgotten, nature itself teaches them and the lesson is harder and more bitter than when their cultivation is freely undertaken.

In the ideal of personal holiness, we have reached the apex of culture, religion, and the vision of God. It has been called a lie, a superstition; but in one hundred years of free thinking, nothing has equalled it, nothing has reached beyond it. Nor has the lot of man been bettered outside of it. There is more misery and there is more sin and death still walks upon the land. One hundred years of progress unto this cataclysmic war. . . .

"Yea faileth now the lute the lutanist
And the dream the dreamer. . . ."

"It is an ill wind that blows no good," says the proverb. After so much bootless hope, one might forgive a deep despair. And yet despair is as much a sin as foolish hope. Out of this thing can come a great and lasting good, if we turn ourselves back to the interpretation of life established by our cultural tradition. The dynamic of our culture must seek anew the sources of its pristine vitality and it must be strengthened again in the waters of eternal life.

The finality of our culture is perfected in charity. It was demonstrated in the supreme charity of Jesus Christ. In the moment when elevated above the world, limp and livid upon the tree of His ignomony, the cry of His Agony is the evangel of our Hope—"who hath so loved the world."

We must go through times of sorrow and sacrifice and discipline, to secure the liberty for which we are embattled. We must go back to the common ordinary standards of nature to develop and strengthen our race. We must nourish a high idealism, untarnished by popular flippancy or scepticism if we are to obtain the promise of our struggle. And above all, we must seek all over again, from the traditions of our forefathers, to learn the lesson of life, to restore to each man the dignity which he should, as a creature of body and soul, possess.

It takes very little to make the cultured man content. Goldsmith put it thus,

"Man wants but little here below
Nor wants that little long. . . ."

All anyone, except the utterly undisciplined, requires has been well

summed up in the four freedoms. Freedom to worship God according to the logic of the mind; freedom of expression; freedom from fear; and freedom from want in his elder years. But to gain these things, there is necessity to practice charity and holiness lest the liberty be perverted to a license and blood again be on the face of the earth.

It is the high office of religion to demonstrate the truth of this; in these hard days, to show the higher hope, to illumine what is dark in men and what is weak to raise and to support. And for the rest, to leave it in the hands of God—there will be place for all of us somewhere under the shadow of His wings.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

104 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

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Kentucky	Louisville	WAVE*	970 kc
Louisiana	New Orleans	WSMB*	1350 kc
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Maryland	Baltimore	WBAL	1090 kc
Massachusetts	Boston	WBZ*	1030 kc
	Springfield	WBZA*	1030 kc
Michigan	Detroit	WWJ	950 kc
Minnesota	Duluth-Superior	WEBC	1320 kc
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104 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

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	Columbus	WCOL	1230 kc
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	Lima	WLOK	1240 kc
	Springfield	WIZE	1340 kc
	Zanesville	WHIZ	1240 kc
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	WKY	930 kc
	Tulsa	KVOO	1170 kc
Oregon	Medford	KMED	1440 kc
	Portland	KEX	1190 kc
Pennsylvania	Allentown	WSAN	1470 kc
	Altoona	WFBG	1340 kc
	Johnstown	WJAC	1400 kc
	Philadelphia	KYW	1060 kc
	Pittsburgh	KDKA	1020 kc
	Reading	WRAW	1340 kc
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Rhode Island	Providence	WJAR	920 kc
South Carolina	Charleston	WTMA	1250 kc
	Columbia	WIS	560 kc
	Florence	WOLS	1230 kc
	Greenville	WFBC	1330 kc
South Dakota	Sioux Falls	KSOO-KELO	1140-1230 kc
Tennessee	Kingsport	WKPT	1400 kc
	Nashville	WSM	650 kc
Texas	Amarillo	KGNC	1440 kc
	Beaumont	KFDM	560 kc
	El Paso	KTSM	1380 kc
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