

2.

**FUNERAL EULOGY
OF
FRANCESCO PATERNÒ CASTELLO
DUKE OF CARCACI**

**BY
FRANCESCO TORNABENE
PRIOR OF THE CASSINESE CONGREGATION**

**Professor of Botany of the Royal University of Catania, Secretary General of the
Goienia Academy of Natural Sciences of the said city, Member of many national and
foreign Academies**

CATANIA

ROYAL CHARITABLE PRESS

1834

*Pure unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this :
Coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it,
And keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.
St. James, ch. I, v. 27*

No, Religion is not some kind of concept, dreamt up by man in an atmosphere of awe and fear, it is a fact, it is a feeling, that arises in every heart, it develops in every mind. No, Religion is not a concept, it is an act of praise, an offering made by every soul, which considers the workings of the universe and studies in depth the relationship that binds the creator to all living things of creation.

Religion, in fact, gives birth to faith and reveals God as the first and last link in the chain of mortal life, that same religion which inspires charity which is shown in love for one's neighbour which is the first and last link in the chain of social life. Yes, by means of religion are forged the links between God and man: thus the charitable man and the spiritual man are united in a wonderful knot; thus charity becomes one with faith.

It was for this reason that Christ did not found his church in caves and dark recesses, but in the midst of the people, he raised its altars in flourishing cities, he preached the Good News, forbade misanthropy, criticised egoism, commanded union with the Heavenly Father, brotherliness, peace with one's neighbour.

Thus, neither extreme acts of penitence, nor the hermit's isolation on their own constitute His spotless and pure religion, but rather a spirit consecrated to the contemplation of God, and a heart hastening to the aid of another: or rather, holy and perfect religion is only that which makes of man a social instrument, which works to convert Adam's race into a loving family, in which the members look after one another in times of danger, help each other in moments of need, comfort each other in misfortune, embrace one another when content, and all these members consecrate to the Heavenly being their actions, their words, their feelings and their thoughts. Pure, unspoilt religion in the eyes of God is this : coming to the help of widows and orphans in their times of tribulation and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

If this is the true spirit of the Catholic religion, if this is the true likeness of holy philanthropy, this was indeed the religion in which our friend both lived and died, for whom today Catania weeps, and every class of society, both sexes, every age weeps for him bitterly : I speak of the noble, the virtuous, the generous, Lord of the Bedchamber in waiting on His Majesty, Francesco Paternò Castello, seventh Duke of Carcaci.

The charitable works which change a man into a hero, and for which the Apostle would willingly be condemned by his colleagues, was the moderator of the feelings and of the desires of Francesco; thus he helped his compatriots impartially and constantly, he aided the destitute, the ward, the orphan and the widow: and just as this holiness arose in him through a sincere sense of morality, so he always saw in the humble and those on whom he bestowed graces and favours that sense of God which sanctifies true charity and covers good works with a supernatural, heavenly merit. For this reason can I say that he truly was a holy temple, a living altar, on which he sacrificed to God the pure and spotless victim of his philanthropic heart, of his devout soul. Pure, unspoilt religion in the eyes of God is this.

And I do not believe he failed. Since this sublime faith made him expel every obstacle from his heart, every feeling of self-interest or vanity, it rendered him magnanimous in the most difficult circumstances just as in the height of good fortune; it led him to break his bread with the hungry, to clothe the naked, visit the sick, console the suffering, assist the downtrodden, counsel those in doubt, bring back those who had strayed off the straight path and to extend a hand in help to all those whom he could who were struck by misfortune. Pure, unspoilt religion in the eyes of God is this : coming to the help of widows and orphans in their times of tribulation. This same faith led him to imitate devoutly the moral teachings of Christ, for whom chastity of body and spirit, denial, self-effacement, in union with God, he consecrated in humility with the gifts of learning, the workings of the intellect, the offerings of prayers and good works. Pure, unspoilt religion in the eyes of God is this ... keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

Even more so, Francesco Paternò Castello gave his heart to his neighbour and was the man of society in need of him; he dedicated his spirit to God and was the man of the Gospel in all the aspects of his life.

I

Whatever may have been the origins of his place in society, of his holdings of land, of his inheritance, of his privileges, it is certain that through the diverse nature of his talents, in time he rose above the weight of his property and good fortune; which even if it appears to the man of vulgar imagination and of little religious sensibility to be something unjust and unfair, because it derives from avarice, disputes, envy, it is also something necessary for the continuation of society, for the encouragement of labour, for the progress of industry, for the development of the intellect, for moral and religious perfection. But if from that source have

their origin the rich and the poor, the wealthy and the needy, pomp and misery, strength and weakness, the lord and the lackey, from this source also arise the origin of natural justice, in which the weak are supported by the strong, the sick seek help from the healthy, the hungry ask for bread from those with plenty, the ignorant are taught by the learned and all men come to the aid of their neighbours; thus it is that all men are members of the same social body. So the money of the poor is hidden within the wealth of the rich; and these latter have a duty to return it when those in need ask it of them.

And if a natural and civil union binds us to our duty to come to the aid of the requests of the poor, all the more are we bound by ties of religious brotherhood ! Gathered together, as the Scriptures say, in one spirit, in one community : called by adoption by one same father; and for whom we are but the stones of a building, the members of a body, the shoots of a vine, the parts of a heart, living and sharing in the one God ! We all participate in the same ceremonies, in the same blessings, we who have one temple, one altar, one priest, one victim, one faith, one hope, should we not also have one spirit of charity ? Who of us would not take in under his own roof him who is lost, who would not give food to the famished, would not give drink to the thirsty, would not cover the limbs of the naked ? Is it not the teaching of the Nazarene to see God Himself in the person of the poor man, or the man who is suffering; a God who receives in his own mercy the assistance given to the needy; a God who promises consolations here on earth, and the highest rewards in Heaven for charity generously given to his own poor children ? Ah ! Good works are an important part of the worship that a Christian must make to his God.

These were the maxims, these the precepts that Francesco saw hidden in every corner, on every wall of his noble, nay sumptuous house, when on the 15th August 1786 he opened his eyes to the light of day in Catania, the son of Mario Paternò Castello Duke of Carcaci and Maria San Martino of the Princes Pardo.

In the very first moments of his life Francesco observed the wealth of riches, the ease of smiling fortune, he saw the splendour of his illustrious descent and he knew in his ancestors a precious inheritance of civil virtue and Christian good works carried out privately and publicly for the needs of the fatherland.

This was Catania after the sad misfortune arising from the disastrous eruption of Mount Etna in 1669 as a result of which many places many places were swamped by the horrid black wave of lava and indeed after the terrible earthquake of 1693 which destroyed buildings so that defenceless orphans had only a flimsy roof over them which

omissis

..... that on the 8th April the body, as specified in his will and without the least pomp, was carried into the Church of Santa Maria di Gesù attached to the Convent of the Reformed Order of Saint Francis.

The deceased's family, not being allowed to preserve their relative's remains in a splendid sarcophagus, raised a monument dedicated to the memory of his virtues in the Church of Santa Maria di Gesù.

Notice : Here it is necessary to remind the innumerable admirers of Francesco Paternò Castello e Sammartino, Duke of Carcaci, of a singular contrast which characterised his noble life on Earth : because of this certain detractors who never fail to denigrate the major works

of great benefactors, the more that they saw our Francesco avoiding honours and glory to seek refuge in the anonymity of his pious and sublime soul, the more they wished in their fiendishness to attribute to him an act of great arrogance in his having reclaimed for his illustrious family the Grand Magistracy of the Order of the Collar dedicated to Saint Agatha, Holy Virgin and Martyr of Catania, to whom the Paternò have ever been devoted and the suppliers of splendid offerings and great gifts, muttering that by such action he wished to raise the power of his Name to Royal heights as almost to confuse the Ducal Residence with the Royal Palace in Naples, where moreover sits he who decides the destiny of the Kingdom ! But, oh my Lords, let us not forget that the Duke of Carcaci, while he harmoniously combined piety and modesty, charity and anonymity, he cultivated with great learning the arts, letters and historical studies and, while he loved to retreat into himself eschewing all earthly pomp, he also sought out glory for the fatherland ! And what greater glory could there be cited for the fatherland, what should we relate unless those most distinguished Persons who have sprung from the illustrious cradle of the Paternò ? The grandeur of Catania is the glory of the Paternò and that of the Paternò is the glory of Catania ? Thus it does not seem at all strange that our Francesco, ever eager to give his Country greater lustre wished to lavish on his native Country this Supreme Honour.

In the course of going through family correspondence, deepening his erudite knowledge of the Royal origins of his Family, in the archives of his great Ancestor the Most Serene Prince Ignatius II Paternò Castello of Biscari (the branch of the Dukes of Carcaci is junior and descends from that of the Princes of Biscari) he found evidence for what was already known to him of the Aragonese origins of his House and the rights of the House to the Magistracy of an Order, among whose knights were men of great renown who were said to be Lords of Spain or more accurately of the Balearic Islands, where they were said to be among the greatest not only of the Kingdom, but of the Latin World and in the Crusades having been among the first to take up the Cross against the Mohammedan infidel who dominated there just as in the land of Sicily before the Normans descended ! Well, our Francesco, by his honesty and by the great prestige of his person and by virtue of having restored such privileges to his House, should have been acclaimed by all and recognised as Grand Master and it would have been as easy matter for him to have obtained the Royal Consent for that exalted position, but he avoided such an honour and in a noteworthy manuscript published only upon the insistence of all the Most Noble members of his family he sought to nominate for such a position his little nephew Don Mario, the eldest child of his own youngest brother, Don Giovanni, the most devoted husband of the Princess Lionora Guttadauro of Emmanuel, because in him was united, by means of his Noble Mother, twice over the blood of the Kings of Aragon and, with the authority of his words, as worthy patriarch, his will prevailed, he appeased the vanity of so many other Heads of numerous great Families, among whom we find persons of high position of rank, authority and influence, and he brought these to recognise without jealousy and with a full sense of justice that his little nephew was the Pretender, the Head of the Great House with its Royal Claims, having inherent in him the Hereditary Grand Magistracy of the Orders of the Family, and recognising in Don Giovanni his father (and brother of our own Francesco) the Regent during the minority of little Prince Mario Paternò Castello e Guttadauro d'Emmanuel, giving due and devoted notice of this to His Majesty the King (D.G.).

And when many, marvelling at this spontaneous renunciation by the Duke of Carcaci, asked him about it, he with pious modesty replied to them : The Glorious Deeds of the House have been handed down because they are not its own property, but rather they belong to History and this is our History, the History of this our beloved Catania, the dear and blessed homeland of the Great Saint Agatha, the Heavenly Patron of our House, to whom we owe the highest devotion and boundless honour. So it is right and it is just that such a burden of

honours should depend on that branch of our Family which is most closely related to the blood of our original Aragonese ancestors who brought so much goodness to the land of Sicily and particularly to the area of Catania and also because it is just that the youthful boldness of our nephew, by the grace of the Almighty, may ask of life a flower of which he may sow many on the difficult path before him : by us and by our voice the Almighty reminds us "Thus passes the glory of the world !" and if we have appropriated so much pretention, believe me that we have done it for the honour of our People and never for our own person, so may it direct itself to God, imploring His forgiveness and His mercy !"

Thus, my Lords, the later Don Francesco Paternò Castello e Sammartino, Duke of Carcaci, in memory of whose great soul it is necessary to bow down and to follow his sublime example