
"The Brownson Memorial Chapel."

In the current issue of The Notre Dame Alumnus our attention is called to a wrong that must be righted. In a brilliant brief essay on "The Illustrious Doctor Brownson," Father John Cavanaugh (self-styled "The Ancient" but in spirit the youngest of us all) records the fact that Major Henry Brownson, in his biography of his father Orestes, states that when the remains of this famous apologist and philosopher were transferred to Notre Dame in 1886, to rest in the crypt of the church, there was an understanding that the chapel should thenceforth be known as the Brownson Memorial Chapel.

Here and now the Religious Bulletin pledges itself to make amends. The homely title, "The Basement Chapel", around which have gathered some of the most beautiful traditions at Notre Dame, yields to the stately "Brownson Memorial Chapel." We are pleased with the change - although the alumni who have found their souls in that little crypt may always remember it as "The Basement Chapel."

Of the transfer of Brownson's remains to the chapel where they now lie, Father Cavanaugh has this to say: "After resting for so many years in their original grave, his remains were borne to Notre Dame and deposited in their present tomb in June, 1886. As chief philosopher on the campus of that day, Father Fitte preached a sermon which for more than one reason is still remembered by many of us old inhabitants. After the Mass, says his biographer, 'The venerable Father General Sorin spoke for a short time of his long and intimate friendship with the distinguished dead whose remains he received with a melancholy satisfaction within the peaceful shades of Notre Dame.'"

Father Cavanaugh makes brief mention of most of the isms adopted by Brownson before his entry into the Catholic Church. In "The Convert", Brownson's spiritual autobiography, some fifteen of these attachments are listed and described. Some of them tickle Fr. Cavanaugh's sense of humor:

"Fancy this grizzled old veteran for a time approving the talented but eccentric Fanny Wright in her war on private ownership of property, and what she called the servitude of marriage - this gentle young one who condoned and even waxed enthusiastic over promiscuity! And fancy him signing up with Robert Dale Owen in his attack on property and democracy - though extreme democracy would be indeed an intolerable and incredible thing.... But whatever Brownson's opinions they continued his whole life long to challenge and intrigue the thinkers not only of America and England, but of France and Germany as well."

That Brownson had the practical piety of a good Notre Dame man is evidenced by his biographer. Father Cavanaugh writes: "He always wore a scapular, recited his rosary daily at almost always about the hour of dusk, and he always wrote with a statue of the Blessed Virgin on his table. His son and biographer says of him: 'His constant meditations on the Trinity and the Incarnation not only enlightened his mind and guided his pen, but also excited in his heart such gratitude and love as had power to restrain him when tempted as strongly as man could be to rebel against ecclesiastical authority, like so many distinguished Catholics of his own time, or even yielding in any degree to the desire of popularity.' He often records that while doing an important or difficult piece of mental work he received Holy Communion daily for a week for its success." And this was half a century before the decree of Pius X encouraged daily Communion.

The Brownson Memorial Chapel it is, then, from this day forward. And the students of Brownson and Carroll Halls will breathe a prayer as they pass his tomb, on their way to and from the altar, that his spirit may grow and be multiplied at Notre Dame.

PRAYERS: Deceased - Wm. Gumber's uncle; the grandmother of I. Cacciatore and A. Camperlengo; two friends of students; Bro. M. Joseph, C.S.C. (Canada). Ill - Dick Tobin's mother; a professor's mother. Five special intentions.