

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

A Catholic, my dear brethren, has no scruple or hesitation in accepting the Scriptures as the inspired word of God, simply because the Church bids him do so. Others build up a religion from the Scriptures, and so found their Church. But we belong to a Church that was founded years before one word of the New Testament was written, and during that period the doctrines of Jesus Christ were preserved and handed down by the Tradition of the Church. And amongst other things that were handed down was the list of the authentic books of the Old Testament, and after they were written and accepted, the four Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Book of the Revelation of St. John.

This accepting the Scriptures on the authority of the Church is not making little of them, but at once raises them above all controversy as the inspired word of God. And there, standing with the Book in hand, is the Teacher, the Divine Teacher, to explain the meaning of the Book to the children.

It is difficult enough for anyone, however good and learned they may be, to live in this world, and not to be swayed and influenced too much by the world. To be in the world and yet not of the world, there is requisite a great power to counterbalance outward attractions by a strong and spiritual inward one. The outward attractions are the things and persons we see and possess and enjoy—the pleasures and comforts of life; the inward attraction is the voice of God bidding us remember our soul, our Creator, the eternal life to come. We sorely need, then, the learning and the comfort of a spiritual teacher, and this we have in the word of God, the Scriptures taught us and explained to us by the Holy Church. Were it not for the word of God, the world would absorb all our interests, and our souls would be left weak and helpless and starving.

To know what a spiritual life is, to have any interest in the saving of our souls, fearing sin, pleasing God, comes from loving to listen to, and to ponder over, and to remember the word of God.

Yes, in the Holy Scriptures there are words that are medicine to our ailing and wounded souls. To counteract the temptations of the Evil One, ever seeking to injure us, the inspired words of Scripture point out and warn us of dangers, show us our weaknesses, disclose to us even where death lies lurking and concealed. We seek advice for bodily ailments; how much more should we do so for the diseases of the soul!

Food is necessary for life, for restoring waste, maintaining health and strength and vigour; so is the word of God for our souls. Daily we gather something from it, and our souls thrive on the wisdom, advice, encouragement found in Holy Writ. And yet we starve our souls, begrudging to read or to listen to it. That the Scripture is our spiritual strength, we cannot doubt. St. Paul says it so plainly. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. 1:16.) Who can open and read the Holy Book even for a little while without finding in their hearts comfort, vigour, fresh influence for good?

The Scriptures likewise inflame our wills with the sacred warmth and fire of Divine love. Especially in this regard the lives and deeds and sayings of holy men recorded in the Scriptures move to admiration. Example bids for and claims our imitation. How many a martyr, a mystic, a hero of Christ and the Church have become such by the glowing examples of noble words and deeds and deaths found in the Scriptures! And most of all in the Gospel narratives, where the sacred life of Christ is revealed to us, the Divine fire of love, that He came to enkindle on the earth, verily inflames our hearts. Oh! the infinite power for good in the reading to memory and dwelling on the words and miracles and sufferings of Jesus Christ. Our lives would be transformed if these sacred words of Scripture were written on our hearts. But how few give themselves a chance to hear them, know them, or think of them!

The protesting power of the Holy Scriptures is in this: that through them we have hope. The confidence the surety of future blessedness is revealed to us in the Holy Writings, and we are filled with hope to do our utmost in the service of God. We are protected from doubt or fear or despair: we are protected from the deceits of the Evil one, because our hope is sure that God is faithful to reward us, in spite of the toil and decay in reaching our home in our Father's realm.

And the word of God is the directing power of our lives. A book could be filled with the wonderful and miraculous instances of one word of Scripture, heard or read, determining and characterizing the whole life of a Saint. "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," was the call of God to St. Antony, and how many years in the desert, in solitude and silence, did he remain faithful in obedience to that one word! The instances of St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, and countless others, will occur to your minds, proving the power of one word of Scripture. It is the word of God as was "Follow Me"

spoken by Jesus Christ to His Apostles. And Peter and Andrew, and John and James, left their boats and Matthew his usury, at that one word!

If we had reverence for the Holy Writ our hearts would be moved to obey as well. The Scripture is the inspired word of God speaking to us, so when we find it how to pray, repent, and trust in God, let us take that word in faith, and bravely use it. The Scripture is full of wisdom, learning, comfort, hope. Let our anxiety be to read it, hear it, ponder over it as much as we can. And the more we do so, the more we shall reverence it; and we shall find with St. Paul "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF NEWMAN

Redfern Mason in America

Cardinal Newman's presence in Birmingham during the closing years of his life was spiritually discerned rather than sensibly felt. Everyone knew that in the red brick building at Edgbaston there lived an old, old man, who, in his slight frame, embodied a chapter of the spiritual life of England; but few of the seething thousands of the Midlands had seen him and fewer still had heard him speak.

To the faithful of the Oratory he was a familiar figure; but to the world outside he was an abstraction, a tradition. He was a force which, long quiescent, might spring into activity under the impulsion of some national emergency.

I was a reporter on one of the Birmingham newspapers in those days and it fell to my duty from time to time to inquire of the Fathers concerning the Cardinal's health. Telephone the Oratorians had none; so every day someone had to make a visit to the Oratory. It was not a pleasant duty. Father Ignatius Ryder would do his best to be urbane; the Irish janitor waxed irascible.

Leading their life of recollection, the Fathers disliked the intrusion of the world. To them the Cardinal was a visible man with God and our visits were so many reminders of the frail tenure on which that link was maintained.

On the rare occasions when the Cardinal preached, a stenographer would be present to take notes of what he said. But he had to be secreted behind a pillar where the speaker could not see him. But, hidden or visible, the press did its work and the Oratorians tacitly recognized that, though the accomplishment of that work might disturb their quiet of mind, its neglect would be of much graver consequence.

For to the world at large Birmingham existed mainly as the home of the author of the "Apologia." Its steel and its jewelry would become dust; but men knew that the words of John Henry Newman would affect generations yet unborn. The Cardinal was the city's one vital source of interest. Joseph Chamberlain might symbolize the activities of life; but Newman typified the things of life beyond life.

When the boys of the Oratory School gave a Latin play, people would go there, regardless of the silliness of the Latin hoping against hope that the Cardinal, as the arranger of the text of "Aulularia" or "Phormio," whatever the play might be, would be in his place. The papers were never long without reference to him. Now the Times would print a rumor that he was troubled in mind and contemplated a return to Anglicanism; now the statement would go forth that his sole joy in life lay in the Mass. One editor, Henry J. Jennings, since famous in financial journalism, wrote a popular life of the Cardinal, bound in a cheap red cover like the "Daily Dialogues." Someone showed it to Newman and, glancing it through, he said it was clever, but the work of a "literary scavenger." The "Athenaeum" dismissed the book as "plattitudinous twaddle" and Jennings's young scribes vied with one another in trying to get the phrase into their own sheet. One rash youth, named Hands, afterwards wounded at Mafeking, succeeded and we waited trembling for the editorial axe to fall. But it did not. Jennings was not the man to shoot the words had stung him. Besides that, Hands was valuable.

Happy were those of us who had a copy of the precious first edition of "The Present Position of Catholics," for it contained the great Oratorian's vivisection of the apostate, Achilli. "Yes, Father Achilli," said Newman, in answer to one of the ex-priest's taunts, "the Church of Rome does stand ashamed; she stands ashamed that she should have brought forth a son like you." And then came the damning list of Achilli's seductions and ravishings. The English courts ordered the paragraph excised from the work; but the Times declared that, if that was English justice, then trial by jury itself stood condemned. If you wish to add the Achilli paragraph to your Newman, you will find it in Wilfrid Ward's biography.

I well remember the famous visit which Mr. Gladstone made to Birmingham at the time of the first Home Rule bill. Between the engagements of his political progress, the great Premier seized the opportunity to visit his old friend and, in my mind's eye, I can still see

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Hagley Road black with people, watching him on his way and wondering what manner of conversation the two friends would have together. There were no dictaphones in those days, else some Oratorian might have stretched punctilio to the breaking point.

The Cardinal was a great lover of music and I sometimes went to the meetings of the Little Oratory in the hope he would be present. But I hope he would be present. I did see him, however, one morning at the Birmingham Festival. Richter was conducting Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and for Newman, Beethoven and Mozart were the apostles of tone. He sat in the front of the great gallery and I recall the thrill that went through the assembly when the word went round that Newman was present. English decorum is against demonstrations of personal regard. They I ave that to Latins and Slavs. But, in their restrained English way, the people showed how profoundly the genius of this leader of thought had entered into their lives. You divined it by whispers and eager glances, by a phsyic tremor that ran through the whole audience.

"He seemed lost in the mystery which is music," a friend said to me afterwards. Indeed, the Cardinal's love for music was as perplexing to the Cardinal's clerical brethren as his fine taste in wine was to teetotalers. "You see he fiddles," said Archbishop Ullathorne half apologetically when Newman had praised a Mass by Mozart which had proved too hard for the archiepiscopal comprehension.

As in a spirit of saintly irony, Newman chose for the music to be sung at Dr. Ullathorne's obsequies the O minor Requiem of Cherubini, a noble work, sculptured and architectural. I remember him as he appeared in the Mass, a figure almost unbelievably fragile, supported by a priest on either hand. Then it was that he spoke the only words that I ever heard from his lips, the Divine formula, Requiescat in pace.

When next I saw the Cardinal he lay between two rows of tapers, his hands folded on his breast, his face fixed in the expression of eternity. The Oratory was in darkness save for the glimmer of the funeral light; the church was full of praying people. The silence was unbroken save for an occasional sob and the footfalls of men and women as they stole in to look on their dead friend, or sadly turned away to see him in this life no more.

Newman's face has often been compared to that of Caesar. But in no portrait that I have ever seen was the resemblance so strong as it was when he lay in his last sleep. The envelope of flesh was not emaciated. Fair as the face of a child, it seemed the chrysalis from which the soul had just emerged. The jaw was firm, but not heavy; the roosting of the flesh gave the nose a boldness that suggested an eagle surveying the infinite.

I knelt in that atmosphere of prayer and the beauty of it sank into my soul. I was not a Catholic in those days, though the "Divina Commedia" had begun to undermine my youthful Voltairianism. The Cardinal's face stamped with the seal of final faith, seemed the silent proclamation of things unseen. The fingers that had penned the words of "stern anger" against Kingsley were still; the eyes that had looked affectionately on the towers of Oxford were closed; but "The death of His saints is precious in the sight of the Lord" and that preciousness seemed imprinted on the august visage before me.

Now he lies in the little cemetery at Rednal, a place of pilgrimage for the Faithful of many lands. The place is quiet and recollected; peace has spread her wings there. Far from the froth and fever of the world the great Cardinal proclaims from his last earthly tenement the reality of the things of the spirit and the transiency of the illusions of the flesh.

ENVY

The vice of pride is the most common of all the vices that dominate the human heart. As children of Adam we have all received our share of it. There is none of us entirely free of it. It is with us even though we may not be aware of its presence. From time to time it manifests itself, however, in one way or another. It may take the form of contempt for others, or of over estimation of our own ability. It may parade itself as vainglory or disguise itself under the appearance of humility. But the meanest form that it can assume is envy. Besides this is its most malicious form. When a man in his pride feels sad at the good fortune of his neighbours and strives to deprive him of his good and happiness so that he may not be better off than he is himself, then that man is said to be jealous or envious. And he possesses about the meanest quality of soul that is possible. He has a possession that will not excite the envy of his fellow men.

This vice may be characterized as the devil's own vice, the particular vice in which he specializes because it was the cause of his own ruin, and he finds it very advantageous in effecting the destruction of others. If he can succeed in sowing the seed of envy in the heart of saint or sinner, he can sit back and calmly watch developments, awaiting the time when he will gather the spoils. This evil seed is very fruitful of all manner of evils. The soul in which it is sown becomes a God forsaken place choked with rank weeds of every variety. The desire to drag his neighbor back again to his own level will allow man to stop at nothing so far as injury to his neighbor's reputation is concerned. He will lose no opportunity to parade before the multitude his hidden faults. He will let fall a disparaging remark here and there and everywhere he thinks it will do harm. He will play the part of the devil by feigning friendship for one he despises, so as to be able to discover means of destroying him. But if he still retains a spark of honor in his mean, sordid soul he will, perhaps, come out into the open and wage a war of persecution instead of resorting to the more subtle tactics. He will hold up to ridicule the innocent victim of his envy every chance he gets. He will snatch away from him the credit that is his due. He will treat him with contempt and reproach because he dared to surpass him, because he presumed to grasp the golden opportunity to better his condition.

ENVY A DETESTABLE EVIL

Outside the heart of man there is nothing in nature that can be likened to envy. Animal will fight with animal to procure food, but this is solely for the purpose of appeasing the appetite that craves satisfaction. When the fight is done it is forgotten. Moreover, there is an exciting cause, something vital to be gained that one has and the other needs. But with envy there is nothing really necessary or even useful to be gained. It is simply a measureless disposition, manifesting itself with no real except disturbance of the peace of soul in the individual who is guilty. He cannot rest quietly because he has within him an evil spirit that will give him no respite. His heart is rankled at the thought that he is unable to accomplish his evil purpose. He sees himself worrying and fretting his life away without being able to gratify his evil design upon his neighbor.

And what a pity it is to see a man act in so unreasonable a manner! How much good could be done if things were only different. The envious man spends his energy to no avail for an evil purpose. This wasted energy could be expended to a better cause and with very fruitful results to his own soul. He has the correct idea about taking an interest in his neighbor's affairs. But he is not taking the correct interest. He is bound to love his neighbor as himself. He loves himself only to despise his neighbor. The thought of his own personal advancement works to the detriment of his neighbor's. The law of love was formulated to be imposed upon someone else. But what a wonderful amount of good he could accomplish if he would only apply this fraternal solicitude of his to a good purpose. If he would only make it a point to advance his neighbor's interests in every possible way, by assisting him instead of hindering him, how much good he would do both for himself and his neighbor.

But this cannot be done until the evil seed of Satan that is making such havoc with his soul is destroyed. The entangling weeds that have sprung from it and have taken such deep root in his heart must first be carefully torn out and then must be sowed the Christ given seed of love. That heart must be first transformed by the presence of Divine grace. At least the thorn of envy must be plucked out and a right intention and direction given to his energy. It is lawful for him to strive to imitate his neighbor, and to advance along the same lines as he has. He may even conduct a friendly rivalry with him

and endeavor to surpass him. But the meanness of spirit that is the mark of sinful envy must be lacking. He must not feel and at his neighbor's success. He must not wish to rob him of the merits that belong to him or to use unlawful means to defraud him. If he is worsted in the contest he must accept defeat without complaining. He must in all fairness admit his neighbor's success and be glad because God has given him a greater good in granting him the grace to overcome envy.—Brooklyn Tablet.

CATHOLIC CHURCH REMAINS DESPITE SHIFTING OF POPULATION

Philadelphia, Evening Bulletin

Following fast on the merger of three important Presbyterian churches in the lower portion of New York city comes the news that a similar movement is in progress in this city, although not yet consummated. In both instances the causes are the same: population has shifted, members have died, or removed, and the younger generation has gone to the country to live.

It is not at all new in this city. In the last thirty years a number of Protestant churches have sold out their buildings and moved westward, or have merged. There seemed no longer any excuse for their existence in their original habitat. The church must follow its congregation or go out of business.

Anyone familiar with the great shifts of population in this city since the early eighties knows that we have developed here a number of groups of foreigners, or foreign-born people, into communities which have little touch with the English-speaking populations. They have language, social conditions and religion of their own kind, and have gradually nudged out those whose ancestors had lived in the older part of the city for generations.

Church mergers under such circumstances seem essential, but one cannot help feeling that some other religious societies have done better by remaining. One almost never hears of a Roman Catholic Church being abandoned or removed. What one does note constantly is their erection of new structures or enlargement of the old. This is in great measure due to the fact that so large a portion of immigrants are Catholics, but it does not disprove the fact that this organization holds its ground while Protestants must shift.

One notable fact is that Catholics think further ahead, they build larger churches, they do not build where none is needed. You never saw four Catholic churches at a single street crossing. The Protestants have been remiss in this respect, but there are some signs of a coming change which may bring about the abandonment of at least some of their unnecessary denominationalism.

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