

PATRIOTISM AND CITIZENSHIP.

Sermon Preached by Canon Bayly, R.D., of Bonovista, in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Sunday, May 28, 1922.

Jeremiah XXIX: 7.—"Seek the peace of the city."

The purpose of this sermon is to set forth the conviction that God the All-wise is not without a plan for the well being of mankind, that nations as well as men who wish to be saved must believe in, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ who is ascended into Heaven and who is the supreme authority in Heaven and in earth. "God blessed for ever."

According to Scripture there are intelligences in the spiritual world who not only refuse to submit to the rule of Jesus Christ, but actively resist His authority. These forces have at their command all the worst passions of men to frustrate His work on earth. Our interest in this struggle cannot be passive. We must take sides. "He that is not with me is against me." The slow working out of the Divine purpose for the good of the race as history shows, carries conviction that the spiritual hosts of wickedness are fighting a losing battle.

The text "Seek ye the peace of the city" urges the servants of God to seek the peace of the city, i.e., of the State or Government. This is in agreement with the general teaching of the Bible. The Kingdom of God is spiritual. It is the alignment of angels and men under obedience to one Lord Jesus Christ. He is "King over the House of Jacob." His servants are "in the world," not "of the world." "The Kingdom of Heaven is like heaven," to work intensively in the whole lump of humanity. So the people of God though captive in a heathen country must seek the peace and not the hurt of those who govern them.

We are suffering in our age from an exaggerated individualism. In practice people give little thought to the importance of a man's attitude towards the State. Great stress is rightly laid upon the important question of what a man is in himself, in his secret life and inward character, what he is in his family, as a husband, a father, a son, or what he is in the church sustaining its honour, and sharing its work. But what he is to the State, what he is as a citizen is too often regarded as a matter of indifference. And yet we profess to believe that "the powers that be are ordained of God."

To the ancient Greeks, the chief end of man was to make the State greater and prosperous. Everything was sacrificed to the common weal. It was a kind of "Who dies if England live" spirit. No matter what kind of England, but whether the individual was good and happy, or whether family life was pure and harmonious was not held to be of the same consequence. This want of balance was the cause of their undoing. God forbid that it should be ours!

The Gospel of Christ in the ideal of human life therein set forth glorifies the possibilities of personal character, but does not overlook the almost sacred functions of the state—"Thou couldst have no power at all except it were given thee from above," nor the duty of rendering to Caesar the

things that are Caesar's and of giving obedience to and praying "for Kings and all in authority." The impact of the Kingdom of God upon the Kingdom of the world is ethical and is to be effected through the sincerity, the righteousness, the consideration, and faithfulness of men whose weapons are not carnal, "whose swords are bathed in heaven" and "whose citizenship is in heaven."

Patriotism is the soul of the people. It is universal. It has the almost unique and magnetic power of bringing all men of one country or race into psychic sympathy. The mother land and the mother tongue are all powerful except in the degenerate. Patriotism is strong in youth, and rekindles in advantage.

"I find it well, in early days When I was heedless young and blate And first could thresh the barn. Ev'n then a wish (I mind its power) A wish that to my latest hour Shall strongly heave my breast, That I for poor old Scotland's sake Some useful plan or beuk could make Or sing a song at least."

We love the natural scenery of our native land. But patriotism is associated chiefly with the men of our race. We glory in the institutions, the literature, the great traditions of the liberty of candid and wholesome speech, in British justice and fair play. Sundered from us by the great Atlantic, Britain is "home" to us, as it is "Mother England" to Americans. Speaking of things English an American writes: "In no other legislative body is the plea to conscience based on principles of truth and justice less likely to be openly made, or if made more certain to be received with doubt, if not with ironical laughter, than in the House of Commons. In no great legislative body is it so sure ultimately to make its way and bring results. Wilberforce fighting the Slave Trade, Romilly reforming the Penal Code, Ashley pleading for the 10 hour bill, all illustrate my contention from the records of yesterday. To-day in the midst of social revolution the same process goes on—tame to be sure, or it would not be English, yet so certainly as to comfort the onlooker with the assurance that here he is watching progress that will not invite reaction."

In his heart he knows that when she has solved her problem he will be forced as so often, before, to go to school to her experience. Whether there be any truth in the story that Queen Victoria when presenting a Bible to an African Chief said, "Here is the secret of England's greatness." I do not know. But just as Newfoundlanders extend their patriotism to the Mother Country—even so do British people, and all other Christian nations, extend theirs to the Holy Land and the Holy City. The statesman-prophet with face towards Jerusalem is symbolic of us all. We cannot but associate ourselves with the great saints and heroes and literature of the Scriptures. "The hill of Zion is the joy of the whole earth." The hills of time echo with the tread of Abraham the friend of God, Moses the Law giver, David the King and

Isaiah the prophet, and most of all do we associate ourselves with the Saviour King, and with the ideals of His everlasting Kingdom. We believe that His teaching and His ideals have uplifted our nation and that the all-wise God has designed a method which in the fulfiling will uplift all mankind.

Our task is to perfect ourselves in our relationship with Him, and with His ideals. Nothing can compensate us for the loss of the vision of God working in history and in life about us now. "O wise men, God is also wise" not by fits and starts of a benevolence similar to that of our own foolish and inconsistent hearts does He work. Consistency, reason, and law, are the methods of His action, and they apply closely, irresistibly, to all our life. His political outlook (I speak it with reverence) is to make free for efficient service, and to bless with His peace every class of every nation upon earth. In this great work as men and Christians we are asked to help seek the peace of the city.

The uplift of all classes of all nations is the unique objective of revelation of religion. God is no respecter of persons. Ancient philosophers had no word of hope for the workman. The labourer was catalogued as a chattel, a piece of property, an implement on his master's estate. The persistent teaching of revealed religion has "raised the poor out of the dust, and lifted up the beggar from the dung hill." This same teaching can only be ignored at great peril. The labouring man as we know him is the creation of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth of Galilee. The wages, the home, the liberty are all His gifts. The labouring man to-day "sits with the princes." He exercises enormous political power, and must bear the responsibility which power carries. Is he in his turn to be the sport of the kingdom of wickedness, or is he to seek the peace of the city of God, and the uplift of all others by patriotic loyalty to high moral ideals. The events of to-day are not reassuring, but Nebuchadnezzar's dream! We all have our shoulders under the burden. No man can safely shirk his responsibility. It must not be "laid up in a napkin," for fear of mistakes. It must be invested to give returns. The citizen who fails to invest his rights, either from scruple or from sheer indifference is a worse foe to the State than the man who uses his dagger, the revolver, or the bomb. "He wrongs himself by leaving his opinion unrepresented, he wrongs the State by refusing a factor on which its counsels depend, and he wrongs his religion when he declines to support the cause of righteousness by obvious and legitimate reasons."

It is a plain duty to study imperial, local and world policies, and to employ all manly and lawful means, influence as well as vote, to secure their right settlement, for "there is in the best Christian lives a power, which within narrow limits and on a small scale exerts Christianity—the power of the spirit, which in itself and amiable, bears down opposition, and in the end triumphs over it." This is never more remarkable than when it is seen in obscure unambitious lives which following in the steps of Christ's sufferings, are at the same time marked by a dignity, a strength and a victorious purpose that tell of their union with His life in heaven, and of His aims for earth.

It may be, that the human race is just entering upon its life, and has before it countless ages of development. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." The Church is the servant of God to leaven the world with the life and spirit of Christ. She is "in the world." She must not be "of the world." Her alliance with the world in the time of Constantine, and her claims to exercise temporal power in the middle ages have long been discredited. In a lesser degree the union of Church and State in England has been disastrous to the spiritual character of her mission at home and abroad. Temporal power is alluring and is courted in this country when denominational influence is strongly used on behalf of men who are seeking place or position. We are often more loyal to our denomination than we are to Christ. Sectarian bigotry is just as much the work of the devil as class feeling, political partisanship and God's work is hindered by unworthy acts now as it was when Moses by an outburst of temper delayed the Exodus of the Israelites for 40 years. A better spirit is shown in a defence of the principles of Christianity dating back to the 2nd century A.D. "Christians dwell in their native lands but as sojourners; they share all things as citizens, and endure all things as strangers; every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign country to them. They are in the flesh; they pass their time on earth, but they live their lives as citizens of heaven."

This is the faith, and the spirit which overcome the world. Embodied, this faith, and this spirit, are idealized to the children of God as One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The city of the Living God. Pray for the peace of the city. This is the field for the highest kind of Patriotism. This we believe to be God's instrument for the salvation of all men, and of all nations—the plan of the all-wise God for the well being of every man and every country. Who then is willing to consecrate himself all that he is, and all that he has to the carrying on of

God's great ideal? Who is willing, by his conduct all round, in the home, in the church, and in the city, to proclaim himself a citizen of heaven? The Ascension of the Lord Jesus to His Throne of Glory calls for nothing less than this. The tide is rising, though slowly.

"For while the tired waves vainly breaking Seem here no painful inch to gain; Far back, through creeks and inlets making Comest silent standing in the main."

God has all eternity to work in, but we have not. Our time is short. Now is the day of salvation for us and for the world. Let us as members of His Church militant believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and resolve to serve Him; let us persist in the endeavour, so that our influence may help and not resist the extension of God's Kingdom over all the earth, and find its expression particularly in the villages and towns and cities of our own land, to seek "peace of the city," "for therein shall ye have peace."

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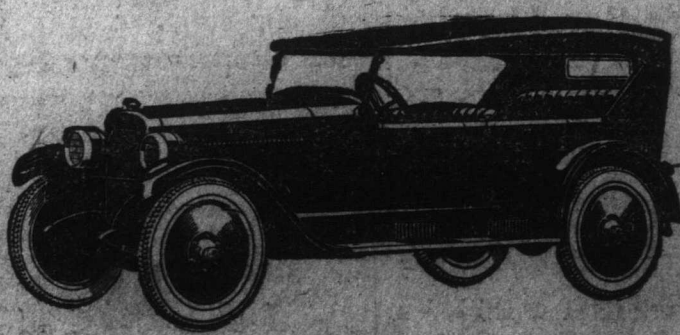
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