

**ARCHBISHOP IRELAND**

**SERMON ON THE GREAT ANNIVERSARY**

Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day: and the same tomorrow. (Hebr. xiii, 8.)

To my old time friends of the Cathedral parish, to all the children of the diocese of St. Paul, I say from my heart—A blessed and happy Christmas! May the Infant of Bethlehem, God Incarnate, make you His own, and spread over your souls, in rich abundance, the gifts of faith, hope and charity, which it was His mission to lavish upon as many as received Him—giving to those who do receive Him the power to be made the Sons of God, to them that believe in His name.

To the world of men the annually recurring festival of Christmas is a day of unusual gladness and rejoicing. None there are, who, in one manner or other, are insensible to the happiness, personal and social, of which it is the harbinger. Once in the ages, manifestly, something did occur, wondrous in the history of the race, the echoes of which never died away—some of the most momentous meaning to humanity, into the influences of which it has so woven the threads of its life-course, that from them it never will be torn asunder.

Yes—once in the ages something did occur, wondrous in history, most meaningful to humanity. Once in the ages the message went forth from the skies: "This day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David."

"This day is born to you a Saviour." The full meaning of the message I fear would tell the world of men. By many it is not understood, and, as around us years go by, less and less it is understood. "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." True to day as of yore the words of the Evangelist: more true, alas! to-day even than of yore.

**JESUS THE SAVIOUR, THE REDEEMER**

"To day is born to you a Saviour." So spoke the angels: so later spoke Jesus Himself. To be the Saviour of men, to redeem men from sin, to reconstruct in souls the image and likeness of God, to open to them the gateways of eternal felicity—this is the mission of Jesus, this the purpose of the Incarnation—this the divine truth which we must apprehend in all its bearings, if Christmas is to be fully understood, if its joyousness is to be fully ours.

The quest of Jesus was the quest of souls. The evil oppressing souls is sin—rebellion against the laws of God, separativeness from the love and the mercy of God. To deliver souls from sin was the work of Jesus. "For He shall save His people from their sins"—it was said of Him to the Virgin Mother. "For this is the blood of the New Testament," said Jesus Himself in prediction of His crucifixion, "which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." And in St. Paul we read: "But God commendeth His charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us: much more, therefore, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved by His life, Jesus was the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier. The highest gift of the Incarnation—this the divine truth which we must apprehend in all its bearings, if Christmas is to be fully understood, if its joyousness is to be fully ours.

What now is the attitude in the world of men around us towards Christ and His teachings? Verily, "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not." There are those who, while casting towards Bethlehem a glance of vague admiration, profess that whatever Jesus may be to others, to them He is as if He had never been. They do not need Him; they need neither His teachings, nor His graces. They are all-sufficient to themselves. Are they not the honest men, the good citizens, the benevolent neighbors, the faithful guardians of those entrusted to their care? What more is required? I answer—this is required, that they remember their duty to God and to His Christ. This is the first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind"; thy God thou shalt love. However the value of this so-called independent morality, from which God is excluded, it is vitally lacking in that chief element of human morality, which demands above and before all else the solemn recognition of the Creator and Sovereign Master, which exacts obedience to His will, submission to His word. God has not visited His people to be neglected by them, to be scorned in His gifts, to be despised and set aside as useless to humanity. Whosoever is asserting His rights to love and worship. Let men be the honest servants, as much as they claim to be; let them have earned earth's wealth and honors to the full extent of their highest ambitions: unless they have served God and kept His commandments their life is a failure; their end is without hope and joy. God has been forgotten; and God is the judge to vindicate the eternal law of gratitude and justice, violated by those who have forgotten Him. No man, no creature, is allowed to mock with impunity the Lord and His anointed.

**JESUS, THE TEACHER OF SUPERNATURAL TRUTH**

Jesus came as the teacher—the herald of the truths of the Supernatural life. He taught, as He should have taught, if men were to know Who He was, what salvation He offered, upon what conditions, and through what agencies it was to be acquired. For three years He was the teacher; and His teaching among men coming to a close, He instituted an apostleship to perpetuate His teachings, saying to its members: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." "Teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded unto you." He taught "as one having authority." He was the Master. By His works He has proven His right to teach: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not." Hence He demanded that men hear Him, believe Him, and obey Him: "Amen, I say to you, he who heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath everlasting life." "He that despiseth Me and keepeth not My words, hath One that judgeth him." The injunction to the Apostles is positive and explicit: "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned." How could it be otherwise? When the One Who has proven Himself God's messenger, God Himself "visiting His people," speaks, He must be heard and believed, because of the reverence due Him. Divine majesty must assert

and sustain itself; the creature cannot be allowed to be indifferent towards the Creator; else the creature were setting himself above the Creator. Jesus taught: to us to seek out His words, and treasure them in love; to us to believe and obey. Mysteries there may be in the revelations of the supernatural: our duty still is to believe, to submit in all things our understanding to the mind of the Almighty. It was the purpose of divine revelation, as St. Paul writes, "to destroy every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, to bring into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ."

**JESUS, THE SANCTIFIER OF SOULS**

Coming as Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus died to merit for men graces whereby they were to be purified from sin and fitted for divine life. He instituted ordinances through which those graces were to descend into souls. He ordered baptism: he allotted to the Apostles the power of binding and loosing; He instituted the sacrament of the Last Supper. To men to submit to those ordinances, or to deprive of the merits of the Redemption. The creature has not the right to mark out his own road to heaven, to assert his independence of the divine planings. Else, again, man should be the Master, and God the servant.

**CHRIST, THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH**

Finally, to perpetuate through ages His teachings, to provide for the ministrations of His graces even unto the end of time, Jesus founded His Church, building it upon the rock that no opposition could shatter or weaken—entrusting to its chiefs His own power, giving to them the promises of abiding guidance: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: as the Father sent me, so also I send you—going, therefore, teach all nations—And behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the ages." The Church of Christ is Christ still dwelling among men, still teaching, still sanctifying: we are not Christ's disciples, we have not entered into the fullness of the spirit of Christmas unless to-day we hear the Church and obey its mandates, as we should hear Christ, and obey His mandates. We wish to hear our immediate teacher and Master.

**THE ATTITUDE OF MANY TOWARDS CHRIST—AN INDEPENDENT MORALITY**

What now is the attitude in the world of men around us towards Christ and His teachings? Verily, "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not." There are those who, while casting towards Bethlehem a glance of vague admiration, profess that whatever Jesus may be to others, to them He is as if He had never been. They do not need Him; they need neither His teachings, nor His graces. They are all-sufficient to themselves. Are they not the honest men, the good citizens, the benevolent neighbors, the faithful guardians of those entrusted to their care? What more is required? I answer—this is required, that they remember their duty to God and to His Christ. This is the first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind"; thy God thou shalt love. However the value of this so-called independent morality, from which God is excluded, it is vitally lacking in that chief element of human morality, which demands above and before all else the solemn recognition of the Creator and Sovereign Master, which exacts obedience to His will, submission to His word. God has not visited His people to be neglected by them, to be scorned in His gifts, to be despised and set aside as useless to humanity. Whosoever is asserting His rights to love and worship. Let men be the honest servants, as much as they claim to be; let them have earned earth's wealth and honors to the full extent of their highest ambitions: unless they have served God and kept His commandments their life is a failure; their end is without hope and joy. God has been forgotten; and God is the judge to vindicate the eternal law of gratitude and justice, violated by those who have forgotten Him. No man, no creature, is allowed to mock with impunity the Lord and His anointed.

**A RELIGION WITHOUT DOGMAS**

Those there are who dare not altogether blot from their title roll the name of Christian, who feel they must in some manner bow on Christmas Day to the crib of Bethlehem, who, however, bid the Christian religion come to them in the form they themselves have chosen: Let it be an uprising of the soul, a sentiment, an emotion towards a better living. But away with dogmas and doctrines; the world has outgrown dogmas and with the world around we must keep pace. An insult to their own reason, no less than an insult to the authority of the Saviour, language of this kind. What is religion without its dogmas and doctrines? To be at all admissible, a religion must define itself, declare its principles, its methods of acting, its conditions of service; and this is dogma doctrine. Does the nation exist without its constitution, without its principles of government—in other words, without its dogmas, its doctrines? Man is not a mere sentiment being, ruled merely by impulse and emo-

tion. The intellect must first have spoken before the will moves; and the voice of the intellect is argument and principle—dogma and doctrine. Jesus entered the world to draw men towards Him: must He not tell us who He is, what His purposes? Must He not propose to us the goal towards which He would have us travel, and read out to us the means through which we may reach it? And this is dogma, doctrine. And Jesus spoke, "as one having authority." By what right shall we, in rebellion to His teachings, hold ourselves free to reject His words—all or any single one? Shall we say, "His words are not truth; and if they are truth are we at liberty to reject the truth? Shall we say, that as if in insanity, Jesus spoke to the winds careless as to who listened to them or bade them pass by? No—the God man does not cast His pearls to the swine; He does not insult His eternal majesty, by telling men to do as they please with the offerings of His love. He taught and He exacted: that His teachings be accepted, that not one iota be dropped from them: "Going, therefore, teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded unto you." "He that believeth not shall be condemned."

**A PHILANTHROPIC RELIGION**

Well, yes—we hear it said—we shall have a Christian Church; but one more fit to appeal to present humanity—a church less religious, more philanthropic—a church that will serve better the requirements of men, that will turn more to earth than to Heaven. I answer: the preaching of Christ was essentially and primarily religious. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, should he lose his own soul? What man supremely needs is the teaching of religion. Of earth he can by himself take sufficient care: of Heaven he knows by himself but little. It is in His reaching towards Heaven that a Saviour, a Redeemer is needed. If religion is no longer the prime office of the Christian Church, in vain were the good tidings of the first Christmas morn: to-day is a Saviour born to you in the City of David." In vain was the shedding of the Blood of Christ on Calvary "unto the remission of sin." In vain was Christ's whole coming, Christ's whole preaching, Christ's whole work from Bethlehem to Calvary. Blot Christ from memory, sink Him into oblivion, rather than debase His name by affixing to it a so-called church, philanthropic rather than religious.

**PROTESTANT CONFSSIONAL**

There is not a sacrament, instituted by Jesus Christ, which is of so much benefit and comfort to the Christian as the sacrament of penance. After baptism it is the only plank left for salvation. But for its remission of sins there would be an almost universal wreckage of souls. Christ knew the weakness of human nature, its proneness to sin, and hence He gave men a means to rise from sin, degradation again to the level of divine grace and favor. The most important condition of forgiveness is sin genuine contrition—a real, sincere sorrow, which includes the firm purpose of amendment—a condition upon which all creeds and religions are agreed. Our Saviour need not have added anything to this condition had He so chosen, but it was His desire to give the sinner an additional help, comfort, and feeling of assurance and safety in the sacrament of penance, of which oral confession to the priest of God is an integral and essential part. How any man of average intelligence can doubt the institution of this sacrament of Christ is almost incredible, and can only be explained by reason of the perversity of the human mind. When Christ after His resurrection appeared to all His apostles, with the exception of Thomas, we read in St. John, chapter xx, "that He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." How could words be plainer? It would be impossible for the apostles, and their successors, the Bishops and priests of the Church, to forgive or retain sins unless they were first confessed. By commission Christ delegated His power to them. Christ as God could forgive sins, and as God He could delegate to them His power and authority. They received a plenipotentiary mission, with full equipment to act, not as though they were human beings could forgive sin (God alone can do that), but that vicariously they might carry out and sit in judgment on those conditions which Christ has established for the forgiveness of sins.

With His divine heart full of kindness, compassion and mercy for the sinner, our divine Lord knew full well the comfort and peace of mind a confession of his sins would bring to him. It is natural, by every arrangement to act, not as though they were human beings could forgive sin (God alone can do that), but that vicariously they might carry out and sit in judgment on those conditions which Christ has established for the forgiveness of sins. With His divine heart full of kindness, compassion and mercy for the sinner, our divine Lord knew full well the comfort and peace of mind a confession of his sins would bring to him. It is natural, by every arrangement to act, not as though they were human beings could forgive sin (God alone can do that), but that vicariously they might carry out and sit in judgment on those conditions which Christ has established for the forgiveness of sins. With His divine heart full of kindness, compassion and mercy for the sinner, our divine Lord knew full well the comfort and peace of mind a confession of his sins would bring to him. It is natural, by every arrangement to act, not as though they were human beings could forgive sin (God alone can do that), but that vicariously they might carry out and sit in judgment on those conditions which Christ has established for the forgiveness of sins.

**A RE-STATEMENT OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST**

Well—we hear it finally said—let the old religion of Bethlehem and Calvary survive, and still continue its course through the world of men; but of its teaching, such as they have been, a re-statement must be made, a recast of form so as to clothe them with modern vestiture; a recast of substance even, so far as this is no longer expressive of present-day aspirations and conditions. What humanity has to-day seen grown in stature that it no longer bends under the ruling hand of God; its intellect has become so enlightened that it no longer bears with the truths of divine revelation; its needs are so expansive that the remedies provided for them by the Saviour of Bethlehem no longer are adequate to satiate them! The time has come, men dare to assert, when the world has outgrown the religion brought to it from Heaven; when it must seek a life of its own making, independent of Him, Who heretofore has reigned as Sovereign Teacher and Master! Veriest of follies and of insane rebellions—this audacious declaration that the revelation of Jesus must restate its formulas of belief and practice, or make way for a new religion, such as the one or the other in the world of men may at will excogitate and enforce. Christ taught—teaching by the authority of the works of the Infinite. He founded the Church, to subsist in all ages, to repeat even to the end of time the truths He has revealed. Christ remains: His Church remains: "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same forever."

**THOSE WHO RECEIVE JESUS OF BETHLEHEM**

Brethren, children of the Church of Christ, my words are for you, to guard you from the vagaries of an unbelieving world, to make you fast upon the rock of the divine faith,

"once for aye delivered to the saints." The world around you does not know the "Word Incarnate." "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not." Children of the Church, you know Him. But do you receive Him, as He wishes you to receive Him? "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Are you among those of His own who have received Him not? Yes—if, only in belief, and not also in actual regeneration of soul, you have received the salvation, of which He was the herald, the Master. Have you on holy Christmas Day washed your souls in His sacramental Blood? Have you for the coming year set your thoughts and resolves in harmony with His teachings and commandments? Is it so with you that all may say: "Of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace?" If so—in all truth, as if sincerely, I wish you a happy Christmas. If so a happy Christmas, indeed, is yours, for you are of those of whom the Gospel says: "But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the Sons of God, to them that believe in His name."

There is not a sacrament, instituted by Jesus Christ, which is of so much benefit and comfort to the Christian as the sacrament of penance. After baptism it is the only plank left for salvation. But for its remission of sins there would be an almost universal wreckage of souls. Christ knew the weakness of human nature, its proneness to sin, and hence He gave men a means to rise from sin, degradation again to the level of divine grace and favor. The most important condition of forgiveness is sin genuine contrition—a real, sincere sorrow, which includes the firm purpose of amendment—a condition upon which all creeds and religions are agreed. Our Saviour need not have added anything to this condition had He so chosen, but it was His desire to give the sinner an additional help, comfort, and feeling of assurance and safety in the sacrament of penance, of which oral confession to the priest of God is an integral and essential part. How any man of average intelligence can doubt the institution of this sacrament of Christ is almost incredible, and can only be explained by reason of the perversity of the human mind. When Christ after His resurrection appeared to all His apostles, with the exception of Thomas, we read in St. John, chapter xx, "that He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." How could words be plainer? It would be impossible for the apostles, and their successors, the Bishops and priests of the Church, to forgive or retain sins unless they were first confessed. By commission Christ delegated His power to them. Christ as God could forgive sins, and as God He could delegate to them His power and authority. They received a plenipotentiary mission, with full equipment to act, not as though they were human beings could forgive sin (God alone can do that), but that vicariously they might carry out and sit in judgment on those conditions which Christ has established for the forgiveness of sins.

**HAVE WOMEN SOULS?**

Frequently reference is made in the radical literature of our day to a supposed discussion held at the Council of Macon to decide whether or not women have souls. The story is taken from the Socialist text-book upon sexual matters, Bebel's "Woman under Socialism." The book, though it has passed through more than thirty editions, and has been translated into nearly every language spoken by Socialists, is as unscientific as it is slanderous, blasphemous and immoral. Its frank paganism and free love doctrines, however, have rendered it popular, while its vile misrepresentations of Christianity and of the Church are thought to contribute to the modern emancipation of womankind.

After striving to prove by disconnected and misunderstood quotations that Christ, St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church were hostile to woman and marriage, he comes to the Council of Macon, "which," to quote De Leon's translation "in the sixteenth (sic) century, discussed the question whether woman had a soul, and which decided with a majority of but one vote, that she had." (p. 52.)

With his wonted carelessness for truth of precision, provided a slander can serve his purpose, no reference to the source of his statement is given. We must accept it upon his assumed veracity and the infallibility of his interpretation. In the official records of the Council no such discussion is noted. The story, as Father W. McMahon, S. J., shows in his "Bebel's Libel on Woman," is founded upon an ignorant or malicious distortion of a perfectly clear passage in the "Historia Francorum"

of Gregory of Tours (VIII, 20): "In this Council," writes Gregory, "there was one of the bishops who declared that a woman could not be called homo (man). But when the other bishops had reasoned with him, he held his peace, for they showed him that the text of the Old Testament laid down that in the beginning when God created man it was said 'male and female He created them, and He called their name Adam,' which means man of the earth, thus applying the same term to woman and man alike, for He designated each of them equally homo."

The question, therefore, whether women have souls was never mentioned in the Council. The discussion consisted merely of an objection made by a single bishop regarding the property of using the term "man" when technically referring to woman, and finally there was no vote taken, but merely an explanation offered, which was at once accepted as satisfactory.

It is with falsehoods like the present, and with apparently learned but misinterpreted quotations and clever sophisms, that the faith of Catholics is attacked on every hand by the Socialist method of propaganda. Naturally the average workman cannot be prepared to give an answer to such countless calumnies against his Church, nor can he distinguish between reliable and unreliable authorities, between misapplied and correct quotations. Every means is used, moreover, to estrange him from his divinely appointed teachers, and to inspire him with distrust and even hatred of the priesthood. He has refused to heed the warnings of the Church, he has knowingly exposed himself to danger, and his loss of faith is almost an inevitable result.

Bebel's volume, which reflects the very lowest stage of sexual degeneracy, is advertised in every Socialist paper, and has even been sold directly by the "Christian Socialist." It is freely recommended as a *vide meum* for every Socialist girl and woman. Its apparent apparatus of vast learning, without any of the reality, renders it sufficiently formidable. Bebel undoubtedly recognized the untenability of many of his statements, bolstered up, as they are, by an array of credulously accepted or misinterpreted authorities; but the book was good propaganda matter and a slur upon Christianity and all religion. The Socialist party has everywhere sought to introduce it, while it has apotheosized its author.

ant can accept, therefore, the Protestants cannot make use of a fundamental need in human nature which craves help and a sharing of its burdens.

"In the second place, I do believe in the right and privilege of the Protestant minister to stand in such a relation to his people that they will turn to him as the confidant of their troubles, and make him the counsellor of their problems.

"There is nothing," Roman Catholic "about this—it is simply human nature which is not a monopoly of any church. I object, in my ministry, to the idea that the Protestant is 'imitating' the Catholic when he uses a universal human principle.

"My meaning of the term 'Protestant confessional' may be summed up as follows: '1. The Protestant minister should be in the closest possible relations to all the people in his parish as a spiritual and practical adviser and friend. If he is not able to win the perfect confidence and respect of his people so that they will naturally regard him as their best friend in spiritual matters and in general counsel, then no 'confessional' is possible.

"2. If such relations are established, the minister will find that it is a help to definite usefulness to have a stated time during the week when his people can come to him with their problems. Sunday afternoon is a good time for such counsel. I have found it so in my own practice for many years.

"3. There are many problems in the lives of men and women that they cannot and will not discuss with their own relatives or friends. If it is an established custom to take such problems to the minister, it will be accepted with a great feeling of relief and gratitude.

"4. The number of such troubles and the kind are limited only by the number of people who come to the minister for help.

"5. In all this there is not the remotest similarity to the Roman Catholic confessional as that is actually practised. The last thing in the world that the Protestant minister wants is a 'copy' of the Roman Catholic confessional. What he does want and ought to have is a personal relation to his people of such a character that he will come to be with them the one person in all the parish who can help them solve their earthly troubles and help bring them close to God. In all this there is not the remotest hint of 'absolution for sin' or 'pardon for sin' or 'indulgence.' Of course it goes without saying that the practise of such a 'confessional' as outlined here means heroic qualities in the ministry and an enlargement of the definition of 'parish work.'

In this statement, Dr. Sheldon gives one of the reasons why Christ established confession as an integral part of the sacrament of penance, when he says that it is "a fundamental need in human nature, which craves help and a sharing of its burdens." How poorly this need, this craving would be satisfied if the penitent sinner could only expect relief from an occasional minister of heroic quality in one of the Protestant churches! We are glad to note that the doctor believes himself possessed of this quality. How could Christ, as the Son of God, have made so sorry a provision, depending upon an exceptional personality, for the Church universal? The efficacy of Christ's sacraments lies in the sacraments themselves, properly conferred, and is not curtailed nor enhanced by the personality of the minister in their administration. Dr. Sheldon need not worry about copying after the Catholic institution. The Catholic institution is the sacrament of penance established by Christ as he may read in the twentieth chapter of St. John.—Intermountain Catholic.

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