

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH

"At that time: To some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others, Jesus also spoke this parable: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Our Lord tells us that the former left the temple a sinful man, as he had entered it; but that the latter went away justified before God.

People often are wont to say that they do not wish to attend church, because they know many attend who are hypocrites, yet who outwardly appear to be good church members. Others will put it a little differently and say: "We are as good as those who attend church regularly." How plainly both of these classes are openly condemned in today's Gospel! People should realize that when they go to church or fulfil their religious duties they are not accountable to God for their neighbors' neglect or insincerity in this respect. When they enter the church, they enter God's house; and if they fully realize who God is, His great power and majesty, they will bow down before Him in prayer and elevate their minds and hearts above earthly people and earthly things. How much more merit would some people gain if, when in church, instead of studying their neighbors, they would meditate entirely on God, in whose presence they are, and humbly ask His forgiveness for their many negligences and misdeeds!

When the publican entered the temple, it is very probable that he was not conscious of any one else being present. His mind was evidently on God, and his heart full of sorrow for his sins. He knew, as all did at that time, the character of the Pharisee, and he was fully aware that the members of this hypocritical sect attended the temple most frequently. Yet the knowledge of all this did not keep the publican from attending to his own duty, or cause him to judge of his neighbor's heart.

If Christians would so enter the church, and attend to their religious obligations in a state of mind such as that of the publican, they, too, would leave the temple justified, and they would be preparing themselves to leave the world, when God would see fit to call them, also justified. Like the publican, they should enter upon the fulfilment of their duties toward God with the persuasion that if they conscientiously do their best, their efforts will be, in the end, for their own personal benefit; and that the wickedness, insincerity, or hypocrisy of others can in no way interfere with this merit. This attitude also will bring them great blessings in their daily lives; perhaps greater even than that their neighbors all did their duty honestly and sincerely. Each one has a personal duty to perform before God. In the performance of this duty, every one should be forgotten except oneself and God. We will be accountable to God only for ourselves, not for our neighbor's conduct; neither will we be excused on the ground that others were negligent.

Nor is it true that any large proportion of those who attend church is not sincere. There always will be, we must confess, some who are hypocrites, but the number of these who daily mix with good religious people is very small. It is not for people to judge of their neighbor's inward intention, or to try to read his heart. "Judge not," says Christ, "and you shall not be judged." Outward appearances are often deceitful, even in a person of excellent morals. To those who are over-exacting and too ready to judge, a small fault will appear as something serious. Let this class of critics remember that the judgments they pass upon the conduct of others are often more sinful than the faults of the ones they judge. They should not be blinded to their own sin committed in judging others.

Whoever, therefore, enters God's church, or temple, enters the house of God, which, as He says, is a house of prayer. If a person fails to make it a place of prayer, for himself particularly, he sins. If any one refrains from entering, on the plea that many who enter do not make it a place of prayer for themselves, he also sins, and in most cases his sin is twofold—one sin is committed by his negligence about his religious duty, the other by the judgment he passes upon the conduct of others. It generally will be found, also, that those who speak most of the neglect and hypocrisy of their co-religionists, mix in their daily life with many who profane God's name, and even who fail to acknowledge the obligations of pressing and practising religion. In church we are in God's company, not in the company of man; remember this always and your churchgoing will be profitable to you.

SPIRITISM OLD AND NEW

James J. Walsh, M. D., Ph. D., in America

Sir Conan Doyle has gone on with his lectures spread out over a month in New York to gradually diminishing audiences. The nine days' wonder has passed and after the proverbial nine days the public are less interested. They have come to realize that in spite of the title of Dr. Doyle's book, "The New Revelation," and the emphasis placed on the novelty of what he had to say, most of it is old material and all of it harks back to manifestations of various kinds with which man has been familiar for centuries, and even millenniums. After all one of the most ancient and widespread ideas in the human race has been the belief in the existence of spirits and that the dead were alive, and, after all from this belief to the acceptance of the idea of possible communications with them or at least of manifestations produced by them is a comparatively short step. As has been well said, men, so far at least as belief in another world than this is concerned, are incurably religious, being quite convinced that one lives on for reward and punishment in a hereafter. Only the fool hath said in his heart there is no God, and it may well be added, only the fool hath said in his heart there is no hereafter.

The most recent investigations in anthropology would absolutely justify the expression that there has never been found a savage tribe, no matter how low it was in the scale of civilization, which did not believe firmly that its dead lived on. It is true they knew very well that men died and their bodies proceeded to disintegrate until they were gradually dissolved, yet they were convinced that the dead were still alive. They were as sure of it as Wordsworth's little girl in "We Are Seven." Superficial investigations of savage tribes very low in the scale of civilization have sometimes led travelers to declare that here at last was a tribe that had no belief in a hereafter, but further research always showed that the assertion was based on imperfect knowledge. Even the cave man, the oldest member of the race of whom we have any definite information buried his dead in the confident persuasion that this Hence he was perfectly willing to bury with them weapons and implements and utensils that it had cost him a long time to construct but he was ready to make the sacrifice for the sake of his dead so that they might be provided with whatever was necessary for them in another world. He knew that their bodies disappeared and that the utensils and weapons which he left near them remained, but it was not the body but some other part of the human being that lived on and he thought there was a corresponding accompaniment of the material things which he left in the grave and which the spirit of his friend or relative took with him into the other world.

The belief in a spirit world is so universal as to represent very well what Fabre, the great French entomologist, called "instinct." He emphasized the fact, too, that such instincts always have a very definite purpose in nature and are never disappointed. Once the universality of the instinct is realized it is not difficult to understand how curious stories of phenomena connected with the spirit-world and Spiritistic manifestations of various kinds have occurred down the ages. After all one of the best tales of consultation of spirits in the other world in order to secure information is Ulysses' visit to the Shades, as it is found in the eleventh book of Homer's Odyssey. Ulysses went down to the nether regions in order to consult Tiresias, the prophet, as to whether he should ever reach home. While down there he saw a number of other spirits, including those of his mother and Achilles. Achilles assured him that he would rather be a hard-working slave on earth than a king in the lower region and Ulysses' mother was interested mainly in earthly concerns, for evidently about the only occupation of mind that the spirits were supposed to have at that time, as it seems to be also in our time, is preoccupation with the affairs of this world.

Ulysses, like all the others who have consulted spirits at various times in history, even down to our own precious day, had to provide for the materialization of the spirits from whom he would obtain information. Ecetoplasm had not been invented as yet, however, so that he could do was to bring with him a sheep whose blood was shed and mingled with new wine and honey, tempered milk in a trench of black earth blended with living waters from the crystal spring so as to provide the materially vital force for the spirits. Since ecetoplasm contains the cells and the salts of the body, according to the most recent investigations, perhaps after all, this combination of nutrient materials which Homer suggested is not so very different, though possibly ecetoplasm may be but a weaker imitation of the strong vital liquor of the heroic days. Possibly that accounts, too, for the fact that only very commonplace people are materialized now while kings and queens and heroes were the materialized spirits of the ancient world. Even Ulysses' mother, however, does not recognize him and cannot talk with him until she has

drunk of the bloody fluid, but then "Straight all the mother in her soul awakes and she proceeds to make inquiries as to how things were happening on earth. I commend that eleventh book of the Odyssey as good reading to those who are interested in Spiritistic phenomena in modern times, for it represents a very interesting scene in the darkness of the nether world.

There have been many other anticipations of Spiritistic phenomena according to old traditions. When, about seventy years ago, a petition signed by 15,000 adherents of the new cult, was sent to Congress appealing to the Federal Government for a formal investigation of the claims of Spiritism, Senator Shields, the distinguished Irishman who had the honor at different times of representing in the Senate no less than three States, reminded the American people that Thomas Nash had told the story of how at the request of the Earl of Surrey, Erasmus and other learned men of the time, Cornelius Agrippa had called up from the grave several of the great philosophers of antiquity in order that they might support their theories in person. According to the same contemporary authority Agrippa also summoned Cicero, the famous orator, to deliver his celebrated oration for Roscius in order to give pleasure to the Emperor, Charles V. For the same august personage he also summoned Kings David and Solomon from the tomb and the Emperor conversed with them long upon the science of government. This was such a remarkable consultation of spirits it is no wonder that the Senate, finding that the American brand of Spiritism offered to accomplish so much less, finally allowed the resolution which had been drawn up in connection with the petition to lie upon the table, and as the table did not tip in indignation, at this summary of the new religion by the Senate it is to be presumed that somehow whatever spirits were present must have been in full accord with the Senate's decision or else they were unable to modify it.

In his first lecture Dr. Doyle referred rather flatly to the "Andrew Jackson Davis, the seer of Poughkeepsie, as one of the great forerunners of Spiritism and a marvelous genius. But one is tempted to wonder why he did not go back a little further to that other well-known healer, the deservedly celebrated Castiglione, for the Poughkeepsie seer was just a magnetic healer. The French seer was also referred to in the debate on Spiritism in the Senate as one who enabled the fine ladies of Paris to sup with the shade of Lucullus while their husbands or brothers, if they were military officers, might discuss the art of war with Alexander or Hannibal or Caesar, and if they were lawyers might argue legal points with the ghost of Cicero. As General Shields said: "These were spiritual manifestations worth paying for and all other degenerate 'mediums' would have to hide their diminished heads in the presence of Castiglione."

The accounts that we have of the wonders produced by Agrippa in the sixteenth century or Castiglione at the end of the eighteenth are attested by men just as honorable, just as learned, quite as skilled in writing and apparently with quite as much right to be heard and have their evidence accepted as Conan Doyle himself. He is very emphatic in proclaiming that anyone who does not accept the evidence that has convinced him must be without intelligence, yet there is no doubt at all about the intelligence of a great many people who accepted the old-time Spiritistic wonders, though now we know that they were completely deceived. What is extremely important to remember is that when one wants to believe something, it is very easy to be satisfied with evidence that has absolutely no appeal to the generality of mankind. Mankind has been so prone to self-deception in just such matters as this that only the most convincing kind of evidence, under the most absolute test-conditions, could possibly affect the majority of mankind.

Of course, there will always be a number of people ready to be taken in by an apparent novelty in thought with regard to great underlying interests of humanity, even though the newness may be quite deceptive. Edmund Burke once said: "The credulity of dupes is as inexhaustible as the invention of knaves." And even without thinking or even hinting as to knavery or even that mankind may be rudely divided into fools and knaves, we must not fail to recall how easily men deceive themselves. It will be a long time before there will ever be accumulated as much evidence for the truth of Spiritistic manifestations as there was, apparently, for witchcraft, and its marvels, in the seventeenth century. When the good Jesuit, Father Spee, ventured to write against witchcraft it seemed as though he were daring to run counter to the universal persuasion of mankind. There were those who did not hesitate to say that what had been accepted always and everywhere and by everybody, *semper et ubique et ab omnibus*, could not help but be the truth. And yet it was only a very partial truth unfortunately so mixed up with error as to lead almost inevitably to the most serious consequences. The witchcraft delusion cost the lives of many thousands of people in the seventeenth century, besides a score

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of them here in America, and it was the intelligent people of the world who were led astray by it.

There may be some great, new physical truth lying just beneath the surface of some of the Spiritistic observations that have recently been made, but it is quite certain that they will prove physical in their relation to psyche and not spiritual. In the meantime it must not be forgotten that the best evidence from a scientific standpoint of Spiritistic phenomena are those Professor Crookes made more than half a century ago and nothing approaching them in character has taken place since then.—James J. Walsh, M. D., Ph. D., in America.

TO AID IN ARGUMENT

Half the controversies in the world would be brought to a prompt termination if they could be brought to a plain issue. Parties engaged in them would then perceive either that in substance they agreed together or that their difference was one of first principles. We need not dispute, we need not prove, we need but define. When men understand what each other means, they see for the most part that controversy is either superfluous or hopeless.—Newman.

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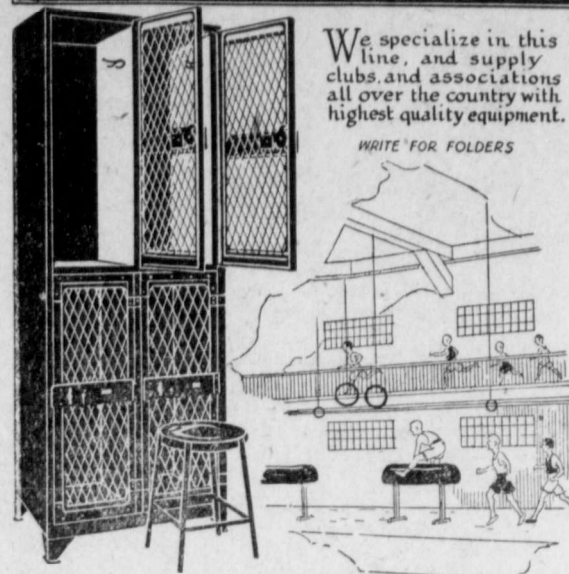
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