

FATHER BURKE.

The following eloquent sermon, the last of his Advent discourses, was delivered by Very Rev. Thomas Burke before a large congregation in the Dominican Church, Dominick-street, Dublin.

"Drop down your dews, ye heavens, from above, and ye clouds rain down the just one; and open thou earth and bud forth a Saviour." These words, my dearly beloved brethren, taken from the 45th chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah, were the text to which I invited your attention and consideration when we began our novena, and to the same words I turn this evening at the conclusion of our Christmas devotions. I told you that in this divine and adorable mystery of the Incarnation we had to consider the action of heaven and the action of earth. The action of heaven—because it was a mystery accomplished first of all in heaven, and through heavenly influence in the person of the Divine and Eternal Word; the action of earth—because it is also a mystery of earth consummated on earth, consummated in a child of man, a true child of a mortal woman, the infant Son of the Blessed Mary, as truly human as He is Divine. Up to the present time in all the reflections that I have put before you, I have only spoken to you of the heavenly aspect of this mystery, the attributes of God as they are revealed through it to us, and the advantages resulting to man from the revelation of the divine attributes of God. But neither you, nor I, nor the angels that are listening to my voice, nor God himself who is about to be born into the midst of us, would be satisfied if we were to conclude these discourses without special allusion to the Virgin Mother of our Saviour. To her therefore and to her part in the adorable mystery of the Incarnation I invite your particular attention this evening.

such a tale, for if I shall say to the sons of men behold, a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son, and His name shall be called Jesus, and He shall be the Son of God, what man will believe me? Yet it was all accomplished in Mary. For over four thousand years darkness overshadowed the world, and the face of God was hidden from His creatures. Mary was the bright day star that was to herald the rising of the glorious sun of justice upon the world. Sixteen years, according to the best authorities, were spent in ardent preparation for the great mystery she, was destined to accomplish, and every moment of her existence was an accumulation of God's graces in her soul. Oh, wonderful are God's dealings with a faithful soul. The soul that corresponds to God's favours receives graces one hundred fold—a thousand fold—receives graces in an inconceivable addition known only to God. From the moment of Mary's conception she received grace after grace from God. Oh, how wonderful must have been that supererogation of graces to Mary when the first gift bestowed upon her surpassingly, exceeded the highest favour conferred upon man or angel. God's favours are over and over the preparation for some crowning favour which he intends to bestow if we merit it by faithful correspondence—some favour that will surpass and consummate all that have gone before. It is so in our own lives. I have had the happiness of administering the Holy Communion to many whom I see here to-night. God could give no higher favour than this, for it was Himself he gave; but many graces thankfully received, faithfully improved, must precede the worthy assistance at the table of the Lord. Great grace went before the horror of sin, the spirit of repentance, the grace that made you resolve that you would die rather than that you would again offend the Almighty. All these were necessary to fit you for the crowning grace of communion with God. Even so it was with Mary. Sixteen years of saintly sinlessness, of exalted purity, were her preparation for the crowning favour of God; and oh, how marvellous must have been that preparation of which the consummation was so high and noble, the highest and the noblest that God Himself had it in His power to accomplish. Surely might the archangel of God exclaim, "Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee," for she indeed abounded in grace. The crowning gift of God to Mary, was God Himself, the eternal Son of God, the light of the Fathers glory, before whom the purest and the highest in heaven kneel in speechless admiration, came down from His throne in heaven, from the bosom of the Almighty, to dwell in her pure bosom to be her Son for ever. There had been pure and holy women on the earth before Mary's time, but to none but her had this great grace been granted, for none but she was worthy. There was Mary the sister of Moses, the friend of God, she who led the virginal choirs of the chosen people; but she was not worthy. There was the daughter of Jephthah, who, when it was announced to her that she must die, for her father had sworn it before the Lord, asked for a little space of time that she might mourn amongst her maidens, not the life she sacrificed in obedience to her father's vow, but the life she must forfeit that she might be the chosen Jewish maiden who would become the mother of the Messiah. Even to the strong woman and the valiant, the mother of the Maccabees, who died seven deaths in the death of her seven sons for the faith of God, even she was not deemed worthy of this crowning favour. For Mary, and Mary alone, was reserved the highest, the grandest gift that an omnipotent God ever did and will ever bestow upon His creature. Such were the favours that Mary received from God. Let us consider now the favours that Mary conferred upon men. "Drop down your dews ye heavens from above, and ye clouds rain down the just one; and open thou earth and bud forth a Saviour." It is the latter part of the text that we are now to consider. Earth as well as heaven, Mary as well as God, had her part in the glorious mystery of the Incarnation—that mystery by which man was redeemed from bondage and from sin and restored to the hope of heaven. We must consider now the essentials in the atonement, the essentials in the victims for this great sacrifice. Man has outraged the eternal majesty of God by sin. The offence is infinite, the atonement must be infinite to satisfy the justice of God. The offence was committed by a man and a man must be the victim. An infinite and a human victim is necessary for the sacrifice. God is necessary in this work of our redemption, for God alone is infinite. Man is necessary, for man alone has offended. The victim must be human and divine, true God and true man; as truly God as he is man, as truly man as he is God. Well, then, might the prophet exclaim, "Oh, ye heavens send down your dews, and ye clouds rain down the just one; and well might he add "and open thou earth and bud forth a Saviour." For the purposes of the Incarnation, therefore, the human element was as necessary as the divine. The victim must be God, that he may offer to God's justice an infinite atonement for an infinite offence. He must be man that he may suffer and die for the sins of man. In Jesus Christ the Man-God that victim was found. He preserved in His person all the power, all the wisdom, all the glory, all the infinite merit of God; but He took to Himself a human nature, capable of sorrow, shame, suffering, and death. That assumption was real, that assumption was eternal. This is difficult to conceive, this is difficult to believe. There were heretics that recoiled from this, they could not believe that the great and eternal God could associate to himself forever this debased and degraded nature of ours, and some said—"Oh, yes, He was a good man, He was a just man, He was a holy man, but He was only a man, He was not God; and they are burning in hell, for they denied the divinity of Christ; and there are others who said He was God indeed, His life proclaims it, His words proclaim it, but He was not man; and they too are burning in hell, for they denied the humanity of the Redeemer. Belief in His divinity and belief in His humanity are equally essential for salvation. It is as necessary to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of Mary as it is to believe that He was the Son of God. Mary was an essential instrument in the hands of God to effect the redemption of the whole human race. She gave the blood of her blood, the flesh of her flesh, the bone of her bone to form the humanity of the Saviour. In her womb the Second Person of the blessed Trinity assumed that human form that was necessary for Him to work out our salvation. "And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." Of all the human beings that lived upon this earth Mary alone was pure enough to become the mother of God. Oh, how perfect must have been the purity, how spotless the sinlessness of that humanity of Mary from which the all pure and all holy God did not disdain to assume a body to Himself. Remember Mary's free consent was necessary for the consummation of this sacrifice. God never did and God never will coerce the will of one of His rational creatures. He sent His angel to announce to Mary the honour that was intended for her, but she was free to refuse that honour if she choose, and her consent was necessary for our redemption. "Behold," said the angel, "thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus." And Mary answered, "How can this be, for I know no man?" Even for the dignity of the mother of God she was unwilling to sacrifice the virginity to which she had vowed herself before the Lord, and the angel eased her fears and told her by the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost should the mystery be accomplished, and then indeed the Virgin cried out—Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done as the angel hath spoken. God that instant became man in Mary's womb. Her free consent was given, and the work of man's redemption was begun.

In this wonderful mystery in which God himself designs not to ask the consent of His creatures for the great work which he was about to accomplish, we have before our eyes a wonderful proof of Mary's purity and Mary's grandeur, mark the language in which the inspired prophet speaks of the Queen of Heaven. Who is she, he exclaims, that comes like the morning rising fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array. Yet she is humble and loving as she is beautiful and glorious. Beject, dearly beloved, what Mary has done for man in the mystery of the Incarnation. By that mystery in which her part was so large salvation was purchased for us all. We may scorn and trample upon the priceless gift if we will, but salvation is offered to us all, and there is no soul to-day in the abyss of hell that might not be in Heaven if he chose. Oh how much, my brethren, has the Incarnation of Jesus in Mary's womb given to man. It gives us the right to hope that when our dying eyes close for ever upon this world they may open upon a world that is brighter far than this, that in death we may behold our Redeemer. It gives us the right this holy Christmas season, by confession and communion, to approach our Saviour; the certainty that if we be faithful to the graces we receive we shall never know death, but shall live for ever in the Kingdom of our Father. All these priceless privileges were conferred upon us when Mary said to the messenger of God "Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it done unto me according to thy word." Behold, then the position which this wonderful woman holds among the human race. Behold all she has received from God, behold all she has given to man. God has made her His mother; we have become her sons. She is our mother; when our Redeemer was expiring on the cross and His mother stood at its foot in speechless agony, our Saviour in His dying words said to her, indicating his beloved disciple John, Woman behold thy son; and to St. John he said, son behold thy mother. St. John stood thus the representative of the whole human race. That moment we became sons of the mother of God, that moment all the intense love in Mary's breaking heart was poured out upon us. We are commanded to love and honour our parents. The same God that demands our adoration for Himself demands our reverence for them. The same God that has said "I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt not have strange gods before me," has said also "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land." We must honour our fathers and mothers in the order of nature because God has commanded it, but God requires a reasonable not a blind obedience, and it needs no command to induce us to honour the mother who bore us into this world. We honour and love her instinctively, we honour and love her because of the untiring care and tender love she has lavished upon us, because of the fierce throes of her maternity the agony she endured that we might be born into the world. But if we thus honour our mother after the order of nature how much higher should be our honour, how much deeper our love for our mother after the order of grace? Our mother brought us forth to this material life, and Mary brought us forth to life eternal. With much suffering and with many prayers did our natural mother give us birth; but Mary suffered for our sake such affliction, such agony as woman never before endured. We are the children of her agony and of her grace. She has proved her affection by the depth of the sorrows she has suffered for our sake, by the priceless value of the benefits she has conferred. But above all at this sacred season when we commemorate the adorable mystery in which her share was so large, we should turn to our sweet and gentle mother with renewed reverence and love. While we adore the Son the mother should not be forgotten, and in the temple of our hearts, purified by the Holy sacraments of the Church, we should erect for her an altar where we may offer our humble homage to our glorious Queen, our earnest gratitude to our magnificent benefactress, and our warmest love to our tender mother.

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PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, } SUPERIOR COURT. District of Montreal } No. 841. Dame Janet McAdam, of the City and District of Montreal, wife of Daniel Munro, of the same place, Plumber and Trader, and judicially authorized a ester en justice. Plaintiff, vs. The said Daniel Munro, Defendant. An action en separation de corps et de biens has been instituted in this cause. GILMAN & HOLTON, Attorneys for Plaintiff. Montreal, 8 February, 1877. 27-5

INSOLVENT ACT OF 1869, 1875. CANADA. PROVINCE OF QUEBEC } SUPERIOR COURT. District of Montreal. } In the matter of Amable Bouchard, Merchant, of the city of Montreal, in the District of Montreal, Insolvent. O. LECOURE, ASSIGNEE. On Wednesday, the seventh day of March next, at the hour of eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the undersigned will apply to the Superior Court, at the Court House, in the City of Montreal, for discharge under said act. AMABLE BOUCHARD, By TRUDEL, TAILLON, & VANASSE, His Attorneys ad litem.

PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, } SUPERIOR COURT. District of Montreal. } No. 370. Dame Caroline Ploude, Plaintiff, vs. Augusto Grundler, Defendant. The Plaintiff has the Seventeenth day of January, instant, instituted at the said Court an action en separation de biens against the Defendant, her husband. Montreal, 23rd January, 1877. ERNEST DESROSIERS, Attorney for Plaintiff. 25-5

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