

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THE REV. F. P. HICKOX, O. S. B.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST'S MIRACLES ON THE SABBATH DAY

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath Day?" (Luke xiv. 1.)

There was a very special motive in our Blessed Lord's acting contrary to the Jewish law, in working cures on the Sabbath day. It was a rebuke to that spirit of keeping the letter of the law in such a hard and uncharitable way. Moreover, it was to show for all time the love and mercy that mankind could hope to receive on Sabbath days in the Church that He was to establish.

There are no less than seven occasions recorded in the gospel on which our Saviour worked miracles on the Sabbath. The first occurred in the synagogue at Capernaum. "There was a man, who had an unclean devil, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, Who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and go out of him; and he went out of him and hurt him not at all" (Luke iv. 35). And immediately Jesus went from the synagogue to Simon's house. "And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Him for her. And standing over her, He commanded the fever and it left her. And immediately rising, she ministered to them" (ibid. 38). And at sunset—that is, when the Sabbath was over—all that had any sick brought them to Him and He healed them.

The third event is thus recorded. "And there was a man, whose right hand was withered. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched Him if He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts; and said to the man who had the withered hand: Arise, and stand forth in the midst. And rising he stood forth. And Jesus said to them; I ask you, if it be lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy? And looking round about on them all, He said to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored. And they were filled with madness, and they talked one to another, what they might do to Jesus" (Luke vi. 6). This miracle is also recorded by St. Matthew (xii. 10) and St. Mark (iii. 1).

The fourth cure is thus related by St. Luke. "And He was teaching in their synagogue on the Sabbath. And behold there was a woman, who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all. When, when Jesus saw her, He called her unto Him, and said to her: Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, answering said to the multitude, Six days there are wherein you ought to work; on them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. And the Lord answering him said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you, on the Sabbath day, loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when He had said these things all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him" (Luke xiii. 11-18).

The very next chapter of St. Luke's is chosen for this day's gospel. You remember we are told that Jesus went into the house of a certain Pharisee; and they watched Him. What an invitation, full of guile and deceit! "And behold there was a certain man before Him, who had the dropsy." Jesus asked them in the words of the text, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? But they held their peace. But He, taking him, healed him and sent him away" (Luke xiv. 1). And then our Lord rebuked them.

The sixth and seventh miracles are recorded by St. John. The scene is at the pool of Bethesda, "where lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water. And an angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond, after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under. And there was a certain man there, who had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity. Him when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that he had been there a long time, He said to him, Will thou be made whole? The infirm man answered, Sir, I have no man to put me into the pond, and whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. And Jesus said to him: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And it was the Sabbath that day. Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus" (John v. 2).

The seventh and last miracle took place immediately after the Jews had taken up stones to cast at

Jesus. "But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple." And passing by He saw a man blind from his birth. Persecuted, His life sought after, yet the Sacred Heart was heedful of the miseries of others. You remember our Lord said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloe." He went, he washed, he came back seeing! Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus opened his eyes. The Pharisees cross-questioned the man; rebuked him and cast him out of the synagogue because he spoke in defence of Jesus. Our Lord meeting him afterwards, revealed Himself to him as the Son of God, "and falling down he adored Him" (John ix. 1).

In all this manifold revelation of the tender love of Christ is there no lesson for ourselves? Yes, indeed: Sunday after Sunday are we not here present before Him? His merciful eyes are looking down upon our souls; ah! if we saw the state of our souls as He sees them, should we not recognize ourselves amongst those sad cases whom He cured on the Sabbath day? What He mercifully did then, He is willing and longing to do now during Holy Mass. Let us humbly own our infirmities, and beg of Him to make us whole, strong to re-enter His service, strong to persevere.

TUTANKHAMON AND THE ISRAELITES

Joseph Huelstein, S. J., in America

Never perhaps did the announcement of antiquarian discoveries so awaken the spirit of romance slumbering within the heart of every man, as when the news of the royal treasures brought to light from the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamon, in the Valley of the Kings, was flashed across the wires of the world. The outer chamber only had as yet been opened by the discoverers, Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter, but what a wealth of riches! There, with carved and modeled figures of the King and Queen, was the throne itself on which the Pharaoh had sat in all his magnificent state. There were the splendid ceremonial couches of Hathor, the Lion and Typhon; the gilt chair sparkling with turquoise, the beds designed with all the artist's and the lapidary's skill to bring happy dreams to the monarch's rest. There, bright in gilt and rich with precious stones, were the four chariots in which he rode, often drawn perhaps by his attendants. From these he viewed the thousands of slaves, with backs bare to the scorching sun, who toiled beneath the rods of their drivers, that with the utmost haste they might complete the monuments of their lord's ambition. There even were the brilliant robes at whose rustle all the court was awed, and the instruments of the musicians who celebrated the royal praises in the days long ago. There, too, most precious of all these precious things, were the rolls of papyrus, not yet scanned, whose secrets would in time be revealed to all the world. And then to think that beyond this chamber there might still be a next, and a next, and a next! No one could tell.

No wonder then that Pharaoh Tutankhamon was suddenly raised to a posthumous notoriety greater than any he had ever established in his own days of life. But among all these objects one was singled out as of special interest by the former Inspector General of Antiquities for the Egyptian Government, Mr. Arthur Weigall, himself one of the discoverers of the tomb of Yuaa and Tuau, the parents of Queen Ty, as also of the burial place of Akhenaton, the father-in-law of Tutankhamon. The object in question was an elegant footstool, inlaid with a row of figures of slaves or captives, some of them with pronounced Semitic features. Quite possibly, remarks Mr. Weigall, these were the "actual Israelites of the Exodus," and lo, forthwith, Tutankhamon becomes the Pharaoh of the oppression!

Here then a new field of interest is thrown wide open to us. The fate of the Hebrew workers under the Egyptian bondage, and their liberation through Moses, are not merely incidents of profound religious importance, they are also viewed in our day as one of the most striking episodes in the history of labor. As such they have long engaged the attention of social historians as well as of Bible students. Unfortunately, throughout these studies the miraculous and the supernatural are commonly ignored and implicitly, if not openly, denied. What alone is accepted as worthy of consideration is the historic basis of fact, which even the rationalist thinker cannot refuse to see. This also is in a manner the attitude of Mr. Weigall in the special article cabled by him to the New York World for January 23.

In the fact that Tutankhamon, whose reign began about the year 1350 B. C., was without a son to succeed him, and in the recurrent failures of the male line among the Pharaohs of this entire period, Mr. Weigall sees a confirmation of the Scripture account of the death of the first-born of the Egyptians at the hand of the Lord: "From the first-born of the Pharaoh who sitteth on his throne even to the first-born of the handmaid that is at the mill." Not Pharaoh only, but the Egyptians as a nation, had mocked and afflicted the children of Israel and as a nation they were also punished. In a similar way

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confirmation of the ten plagues narrated in the Scriptures is sought purely in the frequency of plagues in the Egypt of this period. We do not quarrel with the historic fact he cites. We all know such purely natural visitations to have been common not in the century of Tutankhamon only, but in the succeeding century as well. In reference to both the subjects just mentioned, Mr. Weigall says:

"Biblical students will find herein a confirmation of the Exodus story of the death of the firstborn, or at any rate likely basis for the fact on which the tradition grew up. I notice too that in the great inscription of Tutankhamon, to which Horemheb also inscribed his name, reference is made to the fact that Egypt was overthrown by plagues and that the gods had neglected the land. Egypt indeed was in a bad way during that period, and even if the biblical story of the plague is doubtful we can well understand on what that story is based."

The intelligent Catholic well knows that the frequent occurrence of plagues, purely natural in their origin, in no way conflicts with the occurrence also of other plagues, perhaps in most instances entirely similar although more intense and terrible, sent expressly by Almighty God as a sign to confound the idol worship of the Egyptians and to liberate his children from the hands of their oppressors. To consider these manifestations miraculous it suffices that under such circumstances they were sent instantly and as instantly allayed for no reason, except God's command. Yet we may add that, because of the fatal consequences to the Egyptians, the turning of the waters into blood could in no way be accounted for merely by the natural phenomenon known as the "red Nile." Those who believe in God and in His inspired Word find no difficulty in the Scripture miracles.

But to return to the Pharaoh whom we have left sleeping in the Valley of the Kings. Is Tutankhamon in reality to be accepted as the Pharaoh of the oppression? The conditions pointed out above as existing in the period of his reign existed also during the reigns of the other princes of this period. They could not therefore single him out alone as the Pharaoh whose oppressive measures finally led in the natural order to the Exodus that took place under his successor. Neither can the picture of the Israelite captives give us any clue, since Tutankhamon was but one of a series of Pharaohs who lived in an age of religious fanaticism which may well have led to many and serious troubles with the now vast colony of Jews in the Gessen district, east of the Delta of the Nile.

The period of internal disturbances began with the reign of Akhenaton, who sought to change the religion of the Egyptians by turning them from the cult of their god Amon to the worship of Aton, or the Sun's Disk. He overthrew the monuments sacred to Amon or erased his name. His son-in-law and former courtier Tutankhamon came to the throne in the backwash of all these troubles. This is plain from the fact long familiar to Egyptologists that, probably under popular pressure, he had changed his own name from Tutankhaton, "the live image of Aton," to the form by which now we know it, signifying "the live image of Amon." In the same way his wife, one of the daughters of the old Pharaoh, altered her name from Ankhespaaton, "she lives by Aton," to Ankhesamon, "she lives by Amon."

"A plague on both your gods!" was naturally the Jewish attitude towards these contentions. We may well believe, too, that the Egyptian Know-Nothing movement which was to become so pronounced against all foreigners had already broken out. The Semitic foreigners, moreover, were not merely hated but also feared because of the aid they might give to any Asiatic invader against the tyrannical kings. They occupied a strategic position.

But there is one reason why Tutankhamon cannot possibly have been the Pharaoh of the oppression, and that is the brevity of his reign. The exact length of this is not known to us, but the dates of subsequent reigns make clear that it

could not possibly have been of long duration. Professor Newberry of the University of Liverpool, long connected with Egyptian studies and excavations, believes that "the probability is that he reigned only six years." Even were his reign found to have been much longer it could not attain to the length required for the Pharaoh from whose wrath Moses fled after slaying the Egyptian. Probably forty years elapsed between this event and the appearance of Moses as the messenger of God before Pharaoh. If moreover we take the Pharaoh of the Infanticide as identical with the Pharaoh from whom Moses fled as a grown man, a claim which is made by our commentators, the duration of his reign was enormous. "Now after a long time," says the Scripture, "the king of Egypt died."

In the history of this period there is one Pharaoh who, for this and for many other reasons, has by modern scholars been generally accepted as the Pharaoh of the oppression, and this is Ramesses II., who reigned for sixty-seven years and lived to be about eighty-four years old. He was succeeded, about 1225 B. C., by his son, Minetaph I., who would thus be the Pharaoh of the Exodus, before whom Moses and Aaron appeared. On the gigantic statue of this king, too, it is noted that his eldest son had been associated with him and died before him. Nothing of course is said in the Scripture that would require us to assume that the Pharaoh of the Exodus had perished in the waters of the Red Sea.

The difficulty alleged in this connection is the inscription found on the famous stele of Minetaph I., that: "Israel is desolate, her seed is not." Yet this might readily refer to a small remnant of Israelites exterminated by him after his own disaster, which we would not expect to find recorded among his achievements. Those who know the methods of the monarchs in the valley of the Nile would not look for such records. Minetaph's reign, we may add, began more than a century after the death of Tutankhamon.

The question of the oppression and the Exodus is too vast to discuss here, save for the few remarks already made. Our knowledge of dates and rulers, too, is still so vague and uncertain that it would be rash to speak with positive assurance on these events. Egyptology itself is still at its dawn, but there need be no dread that the biblical narrative will be in any way reversed by the discoveries of Egyptian antiquities.

DAILY MASS

"Every day, sweet son, hear Holy Mass!" So spake the father to his son in the days of chivalry. It was the usual custom in those days, Leon Gautier tells us in his beautiful book on that period.

Good Christians are eager to hear Holy Mass every morning. Like the mother of St. Augustine who says herself, that she never failed to assist daily at the altar, they neglect nothing in order to sanctify the beginning of their day. Had they numerous occupations, they rose earlier, thus rendering their action more meritorious. During his stay at Laghouat, General Sonis, of whom Gallifet says: "No one knew better than he both how to command and how to obey," never failed to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "At six and half, or seven," wrote one of his attaches, he went to church in silence. I used to accompany him. This habit never interfered with the discharge of the important duties of his position. On the contrary, he found himself better disposed to fulfill them, as is always the case when one has peace of conscience and joy of heart.

"The best way to economize time," wrote Ozanam, "is to lose about half an hour every morning at Holy Mass. How much dissipation does not this half an hour conscientiously lost during the rest of the day?"

La Roche Jaquelin, expressing the same thought in his military language said: "When I have lost my morning Mass, I live on a lower level all the rest of the day."

The illustrious Daniel O'Connell, in spite of his busy life, was constantly faithful to this pious habit; and the Dominican, Father Burke, declares that what greatly contributed to his entering the priesthood was the devout attitude of the great Irish orator during Holy Mass.—Southern Cross.

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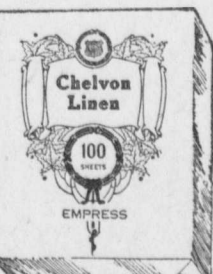


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