

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRISTIAN EQUALITY

"And He said also to His disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods." (LUKE XVI, 1)

It is an evident truth that man must be governed by man to a certain extent. We loudly proclaim our liberty and say that all men are created equal. It is true, as far as the essential constituents of men are concerned, that they are all created equal; but as regards talent, genius, and power, what a great inequality exists among them! Our Lord tells us of a species of this inequality, in the famous parable of the men of different talent. But we need not even go to the teaching of the Bible on this point; experience shows us that men differ greatly.

Now, it is certain that, since men are thus constituted by nature unequal in various points, they will occupy different positions in life. This, of course, refers to temporal and not to spiritual things, for the ignorant and the weak are often much more pleasing in the sight of God than the learned and the strong. Circumstances also often cause these different positions. Some, for instance, are born of the rich and influential and remain during their lives, as it were, on a pedestal with others, less fortunate in this respect, practically depending upon them for the means of subsistence.

In fact, day after day people admit their inferior positions with regard to others, though almost unconsciously. For instance, all men are not doctors. A doctor is superior, in a sense, to those who are not versed in medicine or allowed to practise it. Whether they admit it or not, it is certain that people show their inferiority to these great benefactors of the human race, when they are forced to call a doctor to treat them and relieve them of pain. How many should bless God that there are men who, though superior to them, use this superiority in their favor! To recover their health, they must do what the doctor enjoins upon them; and while thus acting they are showing how they must bow to just superiority. The lawyer is another to whom people submit when they lay their cases in his hands, by that very fact admitting at the same time their inferiority to this man in regard to the work of his professions. So could numerous other examples be cited, which would show that among men there is a good deal of what is practically servitude, though necessarily and beneficially so.

Today's Gospel gives us another illustration of this servitude. One is rich, but the other characters in the parable are evidently poor and give their service to the rich man, even though it be for compensation. If circumstances had made one rich, they had also brought it about in this case that those who were poorer lived on what their service to the rich man brought them. This, too, is necessary today. The great machinery of earning livelihood could not exist if it were not so. In the vast electrical and mechanical plants of the world there are large wheels that revolve and do a great work; there are wheels also that effect much, though they themselves may be small. So it is, to a great degree, with men. Positions never can be equal, all never can do the same amount of work.

There are stewards in abundance in the world today. They are, it is true, of a very different type from the one mentioned by Our Lord; but they are nevertheless subject to others, and dependent upon them for the means of sustenance for themselves and their families. Should they be dissatisfied with their position! Certainly not. How many of them, for instance, successfully could conduct the business of their employers! Not many, we may safely affirm, some would not have the ability to do so, others would not have the honesty. We do not intend to discuss the merits of either. It always should be remembered, however, that when circumstances have placed men in subordinate positions—assuming, of course, that no injustice is being done—they should not strive by unjust means to usurp the places of their superiors, nor should they consider themselves abused. Where real abuses exist, efforts, always conformable to law and order, should be made to eliminate them. The presence of an abuse, however, does not constitute an infallible argument in favor of the destruction or total upheaval of the system in which the abuse exists. There are abuses everywhere and in everything and, though they may be inexcusable, still we must be prepared to encounter them as long as man remains as he is.

Christians of high and of low places, be honest. The work you do here in whatever position you occupy should be such as gradually to fit you for heaven. If your lot be not as fortunate as your neighbor's let the real truth (though it may be hard to accept) that you can, as easily as he, gain your eternal home, effectively penetrate your mind. If you occupy a low position and you have not been placed in it through your own misbehavior, it is not fate or bad luck that has placed you there; it

is God in His providence. Serve Him in that state during the short years of your earthly existence. If you are in a high position, serve Him as carefully. God has better things in store for you if you are careful of your stewardship.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Serious and well-read men of today deem a knowledge of the mighty progress made in the fields of science and art quite essential. Events continually transpiring have changed the current of world thought. In our very country the past century has chronicled notable changes, some for better, some for worse. Material development has had the unfortunate effect of drawing the minds and hearts of multitudes from God to the deification of human idols. This very tendency is largely responsible for the subversive doctrines that come to us under the name of "Modern Thought."

Normal changes will come with the years. We must see to it that they are healthy and beneficial. Any radical departure must be received with suspicion. When such a movement occurs in the field of religion, it is time to take deep thought. Accepted Christianity is eternal. Ephemeral doctrines partake of faddism, which soon passes, leaving its adherents devoid of true moral sense.

Faddists have appeared in the world of science, art, literature, fashion; in fact, in nearly every sphere of human activity. Unfortunately they have invaded the field of religion. They are ready to champion "new" ideas, and question traditional standards. Their misdirected zeal carries them far afield. Some flimsy materialistic doctrine whose very vagueness mystifies, attracts sympathetic souls and strangely the more mystifying so much the more are they convinced that they have arrived at something entirely new and important to the well-being and advancement of mankind.

Many faddists have risen among us, while others have come to us. Sir Conan Doyle finds it more lucrative to talk of Spiritism than to write, so he comes to America, where he will have a greater audience, and people actually flock to hear his so-called spirit messages. This is considered new thought, and certain elements are given to the extravagant view that enlightenment requires frequent mental and religious maneuvering. Perhaps the foremost among these "new-thought" religions is the "Christian Science" movement, which has been in vogue for the past thirty years.

We are greatly indebted to Fr. A. M. Bellwald of the Marist College, Washington, D. C., for his recent work treating of this movement. The book is entitled "Christian Science and the Catholic Faith." It is a fascinating study wherein the author has outlined this new thought and modern healing movement. In fifteen chapters we are given a clear insight into Christian Science, the principles it advances, its origin and growth. The author has thoroughly mastered his subject, through deep study of its fundamental tenets, and refers frequently to writings of the founder, as well as to friends and foes of the movement, to bring out forcefully the inconsistencies and the materialism of the cult.

Beginning at the origin of the movement, we read that there is no claim as to its being original or new, for Mary Baker Eddy, the foundress, goes back to Egypt, Persia, Greece and other pagan countries for her ideas of religion. In ancient times vast populations believed that diseases and pain were sent by some god, and they sought protection and relief by religious and mental means. Health was the paramount consideration. Their lives were spent in taking care of their bodies. Mesmerism and mental-culture were their religion. The ways and means employed, if not identical, were quite similar to those taught by Christian Science.

Mrs. Eddy borrowed some of the methods of mental curing sponsored by her immediate predecessor, Quimby. She stretched to extremes and embellished various adventitious doctrines. Incoherence and obscurity strut through her volumes. There is a noticeable lack of that clearness of diction that one rightfully expects from religion. In theory, one thing is stated, in practice we find quite another. Christian Science conforms neither with the true doctrines of Christianity nor does it coincide with any laws of science. The author of "Christian Science and the Catholic Faith" shows it to rest on mesmerism and superstition. The influence of mind over matter is the keynote.

Mary Baker Eddy goes so far as to place her "precious volume," "Science and Health," above the Bible. "Even the Scriptures," she declares, "gave no direct interpretation of the scientific basis for demonstrating the spiritual principle of healing, until our Heavenly Father saw fit, through the Key to the Scriptures in Science and Health, to unlock the mystery of godliness." This is typical of views expressed on all subjects. It is of more than passing importance to note that her volumes abound in platitudes and generalities, and that even these are so obscure and devoid of meaning that one lays aside the works without gaining the faintest idea of the ground work of this mystifying cult.

Fr. Bellwald brings this out in the statement, speaking of the ethics of the modern movement when he says: "When these new religions aim principally at banishing worry of every kind from man's life, trusting thereby to secure excellent health, their aim being a low one, no high spirituality can result; for the end in view determines the degree of perfection of any act, disposition or doctrinal system. A pure intention makes all the difference in the world in matters ethical."

In this book, we have a valuable addition to the Catholic book shelf. Its splendid expose of the modern "new thought" should give it a real welcome into the libraries of every serious person. It is brim full of data on this movement and at the same time succinctly puts forth the Catholic viewpoint and by opposing doctrine to doctrine brings out the inconsistencies of Christian Science and the forcefully logical position of the Church.

There have always been new systems foisted upon the credulous public. But rarely has any organization outside the Church arisen to champion civilization's ideals and show where such systems, if generally accepted, would lead us. It is true that "whether in laurels or in chains, liberty knows nothing but victory," but why impede the progress of liberty by undermining through "new thought" the ideals which have made America the proudest Republic in the world and Americans heirs to unprecedented opportunity and peerless leadership?—The Pilot.

SOME ADVICE ON MARRIAGE

Judge Joseph Sabath worked for two years in a Chicago court. During that period he listened to 6,500 divorce cases. At its conclusion he broke down, attributing his illness to his extreme concern to provide proper custody for the children of the divorced and to his untiring efforts to reconcile estranged couples. Judge Sabath seems to have taken his duties seriously, but all that he has heard of marital infidelity has not made him a cynic. On his recent retirement, he dictated a statement which deserves to be quoted in its homely entirety:

"Tell the young people not to be afraid. Tell them to marry young. I have seen enough unhappiness in marriage to make any man a cynic, but I am its greatest 'booster.' If a young fellow has a job that is steady and the right girl, let him forget about orange-blossoms, and automobiles, and help his girl to forget too. They should get busy fighting for a home—fighting the world, and not each other.

"I married when I was eighteen, and didn't have a dime, and I know that was a happy marriage. Too many couples insist on having bank accounts, furnished homes and automobiles all ready before they marry. In waiting for these things they learn to be selfish. They want things their own way. When things go wrong, they rush to the divorce court. Neither will give in. The future of their children does not concern them. They are selfish to the core."

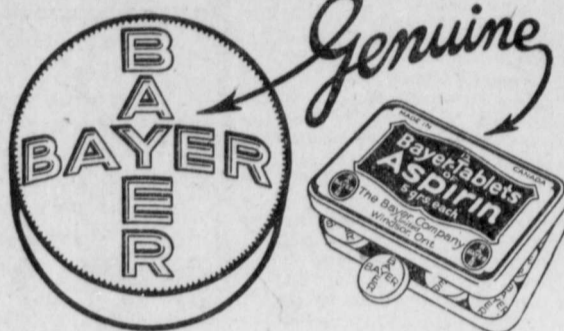
In this last sentence is found what is probably the real reason of all domestic discord and unhappiness, devotion to self. The little girl's definition of marriage as a state "in which we pay for the temporal punishment of sins forgiven, in return to the extent that marriage requires the spirit of sacrifice. Love does not demand rights, but gladly accords them. Love is patient, is kind, is long-suffering, because it thinketh not of self. It does not mean keeping but relinquishing, not receiving but giving. When, therefore, in domestic society, attention is centered upon worldly prosperity to the neglect of the finer things of the spirit, discord is an almost necessary consequence.

The temper of the age is not sacrificial. That is the precise reason why Catholic fathers and mothers should strive to develop a spirit of self-forgetfulness, thrift and content in their children, and practise it in their own domestic relations. Young men complain today that they cannot marry because young women expect to begin their married life, if not in a palace, at least surrounded with all conveniences and with not a few of the trappings of luxury. While, as a rule, "late" marriages are bad both for the individual and for society, marriages from which the spirit of sacrifice is notably absent are disastrous. If the young people cannot reconcile themselves to a starvation-period immediately following the honeymoon, they will be well advised to defer their union, devoting the interval to the cultivation of the spirit of sacrifice.—America.

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