

A GRAND SERMON

Delivered by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons at the Dedication of St. John Baptist Church, Brooklyn.

An account of the dedication of the new Lazarist church of St. John Baptist, Brooklyn, on May 20, appeared in our last issue. The sermon delivered by Cardinal Gibbons on the occasion is of such surpassing eloquence that we herewith reproduce it. The Cardinal announced his text from the gospel of Trinity Sunday. Matthew, xxviii., 19-20: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days unto the end of the world." He spoke in substance as follows:

Jesus Christ is the only religious Founder who had the courage to say to His disciples: "Go, teach all nations. You shall be witnesses to me in Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost bounds of the earth." All other religions have been either national, like the Jewish religion, or territorial, like Mohammedanism, or State religions, like the Greek Church. The Catholic religion alone, as the name implies, is universal, cosmopolitan, world-wide. Christ boldly says to His disciples: "Be not restricted in your mission by state lines nor national boundaries. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. Let My Gospel be as free as the air of heaven. The whole human family are children of My Father. They are My brethren. I have shed My blood for all, and I include all in the circle of My embrace. In a word, let the whole world be the theatre of your labors and all mankind be your audience."

This prophecy of Christ, that His Gospel would be preached to the whole world may not strike us to-day as particularly daring and marvellous, because we are now everywhere confronted by evidences of Christian civilization, and the human family is bound together by social and commercial ties. But in order to fully appreciate the force of our Saviour's prediction we should remember that when it was uttered the whole earth, with the exception of Palestine, was buried in idolatry, and communication with the then known world was slow and difficult, and well-nigh impossible. Before His ascension into heaven, our Divine Saviour delivered a long and touching discourse to His disciples, which was followed by an earnest prayer to His Heavenly Father. The discourse and prayer are a plea for unity of faith and union of hearts among His followers.

In the prayer, He says: "I pray, Father, that all who believe in Me may be one as Thou, Father, and I are one, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. As Thou, the Father, and I are one in essence, I pray that all My Disciples may be united in the bonds of a common faith and a common charity, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Because unity of faith was the most luminous evidence of the Divine mission of Christ, St. Paul insists not less forcibly than his Divine Master on the necessity of oneness of faith.

The words of the Apostle are always worthy of our serious consideration. But they command a special attention and reverence when they are uttered from the depths of his prison in Rome. Writing to the Ephesians, he thus spoke to them: "I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace—one body and one spirit, as you are called, in one hope of your vocation—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in us all. As you all, He says, worship one God and not many gods; as you all recognize one Mediator of redemption and not many mediators; as you all are sanctified by the same Spirit and not by many spirits; as you all hope for the same blessed kingdom in heaven, so should you all profess one and the same faith."

If we peruse with attention the gospels and the epistles of the New Testament we find the idea of unity frequently suggested by the various comparisons which are made with the Church of God. The Church is called a kingdom: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Now, in every well-regulated kingdom there is but one King, one form of government, one uniform body of laws, which all are obliged to observe. In like manner in Christ's spiritual kingdom there must be one Chief, to whom all we owe spiritual allegiance; one form of ecclesiastical government, one uniform body of laws, which all Christians are bound to obey, for "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be laid desolate."

Our Saviour calls His Church a sheepfold— "And there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." What more beautiful and fitting illustration of unity can we have than that which is suggested by a sheepfold? All the sheep of a flock cling together. If they are momentarily separated they are impatient until re-united. They follow in the same path. They feed in the same pastures. They obey the same shepherd and fly from the voice of strangers. So did our Lord intend that all the sheep of His fold should be nourished by the same sacraments and the same bread of life; that they should follow the same rule

of faith as their guide to heaven; that they should listen to the voice of the same divinely-appointed shepherds and that they should carefully shun false teaching. His Church is compared to a human body, "as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members, one of the other."

In one body there are many members, all inseparably connected with the head. The head commands and the feet instantly move, the hand is raised and the lips open. Even so our Lord ordained that His Church, composed of many members, should all be united to one visible head, whom they are bound to obey in matters appertaining to religion. The Church is compared to a vine. "I am the vine," says the Lord, "and ye are the branches. Ye cannot bear fruit unless ye abide in me." It was His intention that His children should cluster around mother Church like the grapes that cluster around the parent vine. We find unity and concord in all the works of God. What striking harmony pervades the physical laws governing this world in which we dwell.

What a wonderful concord and harmony pervades the planetary system above us. Each planet moves in its own orbit without deviating from its path. There is no clashing or collision between them. So regular and uniform are their movements that the astronomer can tell, hundreds of years in advance, the position that a planet will occupy at a given time. And shall we not find the same harmony in that higher world, the Church of God—the most wonderful conception of divine wisdom and the most bounteous manifestation of His goodness and love? Where, then, shall we find this essential unity of faith and government? I answer, in the Catholic Church.

The number of Catholics in the world is computed at about 230,000,000. They have all one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one creed. They receive the same sacraments, they worship at the same altar and pay spiritual allegiance to one common head. How sublime and consoling is the thought that, whithersoever a Catholic goes over the broad world, whether he enters his church in Pekin or Melbourne, in London, or Dublin, or Paris, or Rome, or New York, or San Francisco, he is sure to hear the self-same doctrine preached, to assist at the same sacrifice, and to partake of the same sacraments! This is not all. Her creed is now identical with what it was in past ages. The same gospel of peace that Jesus Christ preached on the mount, the same doctrine that St. Peter preached at Antioch and Rome, St. Paul at Ephesus, St. John Chrysostom at Constantinople, St. Augustine in Hippa, St. Ambrose in Milan, St. Remigius in France, St. Boniface in Germany, St. Athanasius in Alexandria; the same doctrine that St. Patrick introduced into Ireland, that St. Augustine brought into England, and St. Pelagius into Scotland, is ever preached in the Church throughout the globe from January to December—"Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day and forever."

The same admirable unity that exists in matters of faith is also established in the government of the Church. All the members of the vast bodies of Catholic Christians are as intimately united to one visible chief as the members of the human body are joined to the head. The faithful of each parish are subject to their immediate pastor. Each pastor is subordinate to his Bishop, and each Bishop of Christendom acknowledges the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter and the head of the Catholic Church. Witness that stranger that has come to your city, perhaps from Germany or the mountains of Switzerland.

It is Sunday morning. He is walking your streets when he hears the sounds of your church bells. What hallowed associations it arouses in his memory! He accepts its voice as an invitation to prayer. He sees the cross-crowned edifice, and the cross speaks to his heart. And entering your church, while tears run down his sun-burned cheeks, he exclaims, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. For the sparrow hath found for herself a nest and the turtle dove a home. Thy altars are my home, my King and my God."

Looking around him, he observes the paintings of the saints and of the Lord of saints he was accustomed to venerate at home. He sees the baptismal font, which reminds him of the sacred font where he was regenerated in baptism and of the days of his baptismal innocence, and the words of the psalmist rush spontaneously to his mind, "I will go to the altar of God, to God who rejoiceth my youth." He sees the confessionals, which recall to his mind the place where he was accustomed to kneel at the feet of the Lord's anointed and hear those saving words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He sees the altar railing, where he was accustomed to partake of the Holy of holies. He sees the altar ablaze with lights. He sees the pontiff and priests robed in their sacred garments so strange to him who is not of the household of faith, but as familiar to the eye of the initiated as his mother's face.

He hears the sound of the organ and the chant of the choir, singing the joyful Gloria in Excelsis and the immortal creed. He listens to the words of the preface, that masterpiece of musical creation, so simple yet so sublime, so familiar yet so soul-stirring. He sees a multitude of kneeling

worshippers like himself, and he feels in his heart of hearts that he is in the presence of brothers and sisters, who have, with him, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and in us all." And this unity of the Church is maintained without prejudice to her development, just as the oak springs from the corn and preserves its unity.

What a striking illustration of the unity of the Church is presented by the Vatican Council of 1869! Of the thousand Bishops and upward, comprising the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, nearly eight hundred attended the opening session, the rest being unavoidably absent. All parts of the habitable globe were represented at the Council. The Bishops assembled from Great Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland, and from almost every nation and principality in Europe. They met from Canada, the United States, Mexico and South America, and from the islands of the Atlantic and Pacific. They were gathered together from different parts of Africa and Oceania. They went from the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the cradle of the human race; and from the banks of the Jordan, the cradle of Christianity. They came from the banks of the Nile, which was the cradle of the oldest civilization. They came from Mossul, built near the ruins of ancient Nineveh; and from Bagdad, founded near the site of ancient Babylon. They came from the Holy Land, sanctified by the footprints of our blessed Redeemer.

They spoke every civilized language of the world; their faces were marked by almost every color that distinguishes the human family; they belonged to every form of government, they differed in habits and tastes and manners—in all things save faith alone. Well could they exclaim in the language of Revelations, "Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, to God, out of every tribe and nation and people and tongue."

The Church has seen kingdoms rise and fall. She has seen monarchies change into republics and republics change into empires. She has looked on when the Goth and the Saxon, the Vandals and the Saracens invaded the fairest portion of Europe, upsetting thrones and demolishing cities. All this she has seen, while her own divine constitution remains unchanged, and as firm as the rock on which she is planted. To her we must justly apply the words of holy Scriptures: "These things shall perish, but thou remainest, and all of them shall grow old as a garment, and as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed; but thou, O Church of God, art always the same and thy years shall never fail."

You should rejoice, my brethren, that you are the heirs of this heritage of Christ. The proudest boast of the Roman of old was this: "I am a Roman citizen." He was proud of being a citizen of a republic which had lasted for seven hundred years—from the days of Romulus to Augustus Caesar—a republic whose empire extended into Europe as far as the Danube, into Asia as far as Tigris and the Euphrates, and into Africa as far as Mauritania. He was proud of the wisdom of her statesmen and the heroism of her soldiers. You seek for antiquity in the Church. Nearly 2,000 years have rolled over her head, and she is as fresh and vigorous to-day as when she issued from the cenacle of Pentecost. You seek for expansion of territory—her children encircle the entire globe. You seek for wisdom among her sons. Her sages and her saints have been conspicuous for a wisdom compared with which the wisdom of the world is folly. And her martyrs have displayed a heroism not aroused by the sound of martial music, or the clash of arms, or a thirst for earthly dominion, but inspired by a love of God and their fellowmen.

I congratulate you, dear brethren, on the dedication to Almighty God of this beautiful church. It is, indeed, a temple worthy of the living God, to whom it is consecrated. It is another ornament to your City of Churches, and is a monument to your munificence and to the zeal of your pastor. In erecting this temple you do honor to yourselves; for if it is esteemed a great honor for the citizens of the United States to erect a monument to the Father of their country, how much greater is the honor that redounds to you in erecting this monument to your Father who is in heaven! So grand and so noble is the work of erecting a house to the Lord that in the Old Law, when it was a question of raising up a temple to the Most High the enterprise was conceived by one King, was carried into execution by another, and the temple was decorated and repaired by a third. King Solomon built the temple, King Josiah and other Kings repaired and adorned it. And in the Christian dispensation, from the days of Constantine down to a recent period, it was Kings and Emperors and Princes in conjunction with the chief pastors of the Church that almost exclusively exercised the glorious privileges of raising up in their respective dominions grand basilicas, many of which survive to this day and attest the piety and zeal of their royal founders.

The Constantines of new Rome, the Edwards of England, the Margarets of Scotland, the Louises of France, the Elizabeths and Stephens of Hungary, and Canutes of Denmark made their reigns conspicuous by the monuments of worship which they erected in their kingdoms. But the times have

changed and a prerogative which was formerly exercised only by crowned heads is now handed over to the people. What kings and queens alone could do of old you have done now in erecting this church to Almighty God, and though you have not kingly wealth nor royal titles, you have proved by your generous offerings that you have royal hearts. And as Cato in his old age looked with pride upon the wide-spreading trees which his own hands had planted in his youth, so will you one day point with pride to this imposing church, which is the work of your hands and which will give shelter to thousands of worshipping Christians and nourish them with the bread of life.

May the blessing which the Almighty God promised to Solomon be bestowed also on you, and may He whisper to your hearts those words which He addressed to His royal servant: "My eyes shall be open and my ears attentive to the prayer of Him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that My name shall be there forever and My eyes and heart may remain there perpetually."—Buffalo Union and Times.

AGNOSTICISM VERSUS FAITH.

We have great sympathy for agnostics—that is for the honest ones and those who are actuated by a disinterested and manly spirit. We believe that a man can be an honest agnostic and persuade himself that faith is unreasonable and even perilous. This is especially the case with one who has had defective religious training and is not religiously inclined. There is something very plausible in the so-called scientific view of things in which the assumptions and speculations of intellectual men are sought to be substituted for the truth of Christianity. In fact experience proves that there is danger of men well instructed in the Christian faith falling from grace, losing faith entirely, and becoming agnostics and sometimes violent infidels.

This suggests the question, What do such men gain? and it is obvious to remark that their only gain, if indeed it be a gain, is the liberty of indulging their appetites and passions freely and without restraint, which is neither manly or wise.

We by no means wish to be understood now as saying that all agnostics and infidels are vicious and immoral. Many of them claim to advocate a morality superior to that of the Gospel, apparently quite unconscious that they are indebted to that same Gospel for their high-toned teachings in regard to moral conduct. Of one thing we are quite certain; that is that the man who has deliberately abandoned the Christian faith for infidelity and agnosticism has not improved either his intellectual or his moral standard, nor has he added to his real happiness.

The motives of such a change are various. Sometimes men are disgusted with the scandals that exist among Christian people and even among the clergy. Very unreasonably, certainly, for, in the first place, they fail to make allowance for the infirmities of human nature, from which they, themselves are not exempt, and, secondly, they do not gain anything by joining the ranks of the enemies of Christianity who, without the restraining influence of Christian principle and Christian motive, give greater scandal than the Christians of whom they complain.

The fact is that without the restraints of conscience binding us fast to the authority of Almighty God, our Creator, we have no security for human action, no adequate motive for high, and holy, and disinterested conduct.

In the midst of the wild orgies of the French Revolution that prince of infidels, Voltaire, in view of the terrible effects of the teaching of the Encyclopedists, exclaimed: "Don't unchain the tiger." Never did man have a better opportunity of witnessing the development of the tiger in human nature and the necessity of the restraints of conscience to curb that beast than he did, and we do well to learn the lesson even from this great enemy.

But the most common motive for exchanging faith for agnosticism is the difficulties that surround the teaching of Christianity. But does the agnostic escape difficulties by his assumptions and vague speculations? Not at all. On the contrary he surrounds himself with still greater difficulties for which he has no satisfactory solution. He speculates about the origin of the universe; the creation of man; the destiny and even the future existence of the soul, if indeed, there be a soul; and the origin of evil. Why are we created and placed in this world of temptation without our consent. If God is omnipotent and all merciful why does He permit suffering? If He is all loving how can He be just; and a host of like questions which will arise in the mind and puzzle the acutest intellect, the most profound philosopher.

Now if Christianity does not satisfactorily clear up all these difficulties it has the most reasonable and satisfactory explanation of them. Catholic theology, of which the world is so ignorant, is a wonderful system. It is a unique, harmonious, well constructed and well ordered system, perfectly logical in all its parts and embracing the results of the combined wisdom of the ages aided by the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. This system satisfies the intellect and the heart of the greatest and wisest of our race at the same time that it furnishes the only real comfort and consolation of the masses, the poor, the destitute, the afflicted, and forlorn of every class. It is a religion of authority and appeals to faith. It appeals also to the

heart and the affections and satisfies the natural longing and aspirations of the soul for something higher, purer, better than anything that this transitory world can afford.

Agnosticism does neither. It appeals only to intellectual men and is not adapted to the masses. It is simply a frail barque launched upon a boundless ocean without chart or compass, and finally leaves the soul stranded on a dry and barren beach with no friendly hand to render needed succor.

Suppose, for a moment, that the arguments in favor of agnosticism and Christian faith were only equal, what sane, right-thinking, right-feeling man could hesitate a moment which to choose? Aside from the weight of argument, the doctrine of chances would lead him to embrace Christianity. No man can prove absolutely that Christianity is not true. No man can say positively that it may not after all be true. Now suppose the Christian should find at last that he has been mistaken, he will have lost nothing but will have gained immensely even in this life in spiritual comfort, peace and satisfaction; while, on the other hand, if the agnostic finds that he has been mistaken and that after all Christianity is true he certainly will suffer loss. Faith is better for the individual, better for society. It alone furnishes comfort and consolation for the masses in the midst of the troubles and trials of life; while agnosticism though it may please the intellectual and minister to the temporal gratification of the rich and prosperous, yet unchains the tiger and leaves the toiling, suffering millions without hope or consolation either in this world or in that which is to come. Our agnostic friends are professedly toiling for the "emancipation" of the race. From the emancipation which their principles and teachings tend to produce we fervently pray: "Good Lord, deliver us," and may He give them a better mind.—Catholic Review.

Irish Servant Girls.

I was much affected by a spectacle witnessed on last Monday, in the South Boston post-office. A two score of Irish *colleens*, dark-haired, blue-eyed, of white and pink complexions, were arrayed one behind the other, before the window of the money order department. When each secured the form to be filled for a foreign order, the educated among them, after filling in their own forms, would afterwards fill in those of their illiterate sisters. "Do you know how much they send home every week?" said the post-master to me,—"half of their wages. If the girl's wages are, say, \$3 a week, Monday is always pay day, she sends a \$1.50 to her old parents in Ireland. Four dollars is the average wages, and of two this sum is remitted to the parental home every Monday."

"Shure it's almost ten shillin' shillings, sor," one of them said to me, "and it will support a family of seven for a week in the old land. The value of American money in Ireland, is much more than it is here."—Eugene Davis.

Byron used a great deal of hair dressing, but was very particular to have only the best to be found in the market. If Ayer's Hair Vigor had been obtainable then, doubtless he would have tested its merits, as so many distinguished and fashionable people are doing now-a-days.

It is a great public benefit. These significant words were used in relation to DR. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL, by a gentleman who had thoroughly tested its merits in his own case—having been cured by it of lameness of the knee, of three or four years' standing. It never fails to remove soreness as well as lameness, and is an incomparable pulmonary and corrective.

Two years ago I had a bad attack of biliousness and took one bottle of Burdock Blood Bitters, and can truly recommend it to anyone suffering from this complaint. Mrs. Chas. Brown, Toronto.

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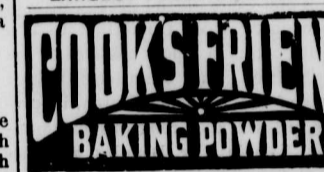
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