

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKET, O. S. B.
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CHRIST THE REDEEMER

"He will save us." (Isa. xxxiii. 22.)

Advent is drawing to a close, my dear brethren, and we come to the end of the text. The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us.

Christmas-tide naturally leads us to think of Him Who came to save His people from their sins. (Matt. i. 21.) The remembrance of His coming should make us glad and grateful.

What was the reason, the motive, of this infinite goodness of God? That is the first and uppermost thought when we hear "He will save us."

And as He was God and Man, He had the full power to save us. As God, He could not have suffered; as Man alone, His redemption would not have satisfied the infinite justice and holiness of God.

And, being born, He dwelt on earth for thirty three years. Emmanuel, God with us, and in what manner did our Lord save us?

When reading the Gospel narrative it is but natural for us to yearn to have lived in those days, and to have seen Him, and to have been near Him, and to have listened to His words.

So with the eyes of faith, we can see Him now—see His miracles, acts of mercy to our own souls. For He is with us yet in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

And does the Blessed Eucharist continue the work that He did on earth? Yes, the Blessed Sacrament can and will save us. First, it can save us, for it is God.

And, lastly, the Blessed Sacrament proves the love of Christ and awakens ours. Proves His love, for even He could do no more! What more could even the Almighty do than give us Himself?

If we are cold and unloving, it is all our own fault, for He, Who came

to save the world, is here to save us still. What better opportunity could we have of renewing our faith and fervour than this holy Christmas time, the anniversary of His coming to save us?

TEMPERANCE

WHY?

- 1. Some say alcohol gives strength. If so why do athletes abstain while training for a race or other contests requiring strength?
2. Some say alcohol gives endurance. If so, why do great employers of labor cut off the supply of drink when work of an especially arduous or lengthened nature is required?
3. Some say alcohol gives heat. If so, why do travelers in the Arctic regions who take drink succumb to the cold, while total abstainers remain unharmed?
4. Some say alcohol is good in hot countries. If so, why did Stanley refuse to give it to his men in his forced march across Africa in search of Emin Pasha?
5. Some say alcohol steadies the nerves. If so, why do surgeons abstain before beginning a delicate operation?
6. Some say alcohol sustains the health. If so, why do insurance companies take total abstainers at a lower premium than others?
7. Some say it is dangerous suddenly to give up the use of alcohol. If so, why do prisoners, most of whom are obliged suddenly to abstain improve in health?—Catholic Temperance Advocate.

NORWAY'S FIRST TOTAL ABSTINENCE ORGANIZER

When the first American Temperance Society was organized in Boston in the early part of 1826, to promote abstinence from distilled liquors, there was toddling about the home of a small shopkeeper in Stavenger, Norway, a little two-year-old boy who was destined to be the founder of a great national total abstinence society in that country, the first in all Scandinavia.

The growth of this boy from childhood to youth ran parallel with the growth of the idea in the American temperance societies, that to combat intemperance, abstinence from rum, beer, wine and cider is as necessary as abstinence from whisky and brandy.

The year that the Stavenger boy, Asbjorn Kloster, was ten years old a temperance convention in Philadelphia voted down a proposition to include beer and wine in the temperance pledge, but three years later (1830) at a great convention in Saratoga, attended by prominent philanthropists, clergymen and representatives from many of the 8,000 American temperance societies then in operation, the total abstinence pledge was recommended.

The same year in the home town of the Norway boy, now approaching his thirteenth year, the first temperance society in Norway was organized on a little more liberal basis than the first ones in America, namely moderation in the use of spirits. At that time every household in Norway was permitted to distill spirits for his own use and from the time the permission was given, 1816 to 1833, the consumption rose from 5.8 liters per capita to 16 liters.

He organized in Stavenger in December, 1859, the first total abstinence society in Scandinavia, one that has continued to grow in numbers and educational activity and has been a preponderating influence in the present strong anti-alcohol sentiment of that country.—Scientific Temperance Journal.

AUTOMATIC CATHOLICS

They rush from their homes on Sunday morning, hurrying along as they catch the peal of the Mass bell from the distance, only to arrive at the church door as the congregation is rising for the reading of the gospel. They consume a few minutes of the Mass, attend to their personal comfort and by about the time they have fixed themselves comfortably the Sanctus bell has rung. They have hardly caught sight of the altar yet; they turn distractedly from side to side, taking mental note of the millinery if they are women.

Then comes the solemn hush for the consecration. With head bowed they ejaculate a short prayer, mechanically stroke their breast and the consecration over, the canon of the Mass, with its intenseness and secrecy and solemnity, is laid upon them. They can hardly hold the steeds of distraction plunging through their brain. Only one whose soul is anchored at the chalice appreciates the ebb and flow of that sacrificial sea. There is so little to feed the senses, to satisfy the eye and to lull the ear in the mystic progress of the great sacrifice. It is so easy to fix the soul on the wonderful mystery operating. The little bell tinkles again—domine non sum dignus. A moment of suggested reverence, a reverence almost forced from indifference by the piety and attention of the congregation. The people in the rear of the church take their cue from those before them, bow their heads and bless themselves. The last gospel is spent in brushing the

dust from the clothing and the first rush towards the door bears with it generally those who have been last to enter.—Canadian Messenger.

RELIGIOUS CONDITION IN SCOTLAND

Rev. H. G. Graham, formerly a Presbyterian Minister

I gladly avail myself of the hospitality of this valuable journal to offer a few remarks about poor old Scotland and its Catholicity. The only claim I can make to speak with any interest in the subject at all is that I happen to be a brand plucked from the burning of Presbyterianism. Through no fault of my own, I was born of a long line of parish ministers—respectable gentlemen, so far as I ever heard or knew of them—and, partly, no doubt through my own fault, I kept up the fun by becoming one myself. As, according to a common Scotch saying, ministers' sons are the worst, I was quite a suitable person for the profession. When I vested, I was minister of a parish in Lanarkshire where memories of "the killing times" under the burghs were still alive, and where a monument at the Battlefield of Drumclog testified to the victory of "our Covenanting forefathers" over "Bloody Graham of Claverhouse" (bad angry for me) and his dragoons. Although it was only English prelate that was then being forced down their throats, quite a multitude of Scotch folks think, or pretend to think, it was Popery, or if driven from that, they will say: "After all there is but a paper partition between them." The one is almost as difficult for them to swallow as the other. "Thanks and praise be to God and little Lady to the Devil" was how a cautious cleric expressed it on a trying occasion in those dangerous days.

My period of internal misery and ritualistic capering came to an end, to my intense relief, and the doubtless no less intense relief of the parishioners, when I told off in 1903. I nearly caused my dear old father a paralytic seizure when I went to tell him I was bundling up and making for Rome. He thought he should never see me more. "By next morning, however, he had regained his Scotch philosophic composure, and calmly remarked: "You'll be needing some money for this business." (I wasn't, but later he sent a goodly sum to the Collegio Scozzese, Rome). He had not the faintest glimmering of what Catholicism really is; neither had a sister of mine, a doctor's widow who remarked to a friend not long ago: "You know my brother is the worst kind of Catholic; he's a Jesuit." To them Jesus was not a member of a religious order, but only a more than usually objectionable Catholic, bigotted, aggressive and proselytizing, in short, offensive (in the military sense as well).

You never know Protestantism thoroughly till you become a Catholic; I have learnt a whole lot about it since I "turned," and two things I have learnt in particular, the quite preternatural ignorance of Protestants about the Catholic Church, and the unprecedently unique absence amongst them of all knowledge of supernatural religion. The ignorance, of course, was prepared for in a country that has groined under three hundred years of Presbyterian teaching and traditions. But besides that the trouble is that people have sunk into a profound naturalism. The God they adore is the God of nature, and their religion is the religion of nature. The God of Revelation, the God whom their forefathers not many generations back did worship to a great extent, with His divine and indefeasible claims upon them, has largely disappeared from their vision.

You can see that from the present state of religion. Time was when the people used to read the Bible and have family prayers and keep the fast days. They never missed the Kirk or the "Sawbath" and got their children christened and so on. Gone are those days now—not among all, of course, but among vast masses especially in towns, who never go to Kirk and never pray. They leave their children unbaptized, and simply are "without God in the world." With all this religious instruction takes a back seat in the schools, elbowed out by the crushing demands of the secular code. As they find it impossible to serve God and Mammon simultaneously, they have plumped for Mammon. Formerly, if you contended with a Protestant, he would meet you with passages of Scripture or answer from "The Shorter Catechism," and you knew where you were. He couldn't do that now, he doesn't know them well enough. He will only say, "I don't think God would do this," or "I don't believe that," and all the queerest notions under the sun—that is, he is making his own religion, and doesn't care a twopenny ticket whether it is that of the Bible or not. The pretence that Protestantism is the religion of the Bible is abandoned, and very properly and honestly; it is the religion of yourself. It is a weird thing to see how Protestantism has realized itself as Naturalism.

There are no statistics available for the number of conversions in this country. Scotland's population, 1911, was 4,760,904. The Catholic population in December, 1916, was given in the Official Directory as over 548,000 (i. e., between 1/8 and 1/9 of the whole) of which 400,000 were in the Glasgow Archdiocese alone. This is a great increase, cer-

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tainty, over the figures of a quarter century ago, but due, I am afraid, not so much to the conversion of the Scotch as to the natural increase of the Irish resident here, and the continuous immigration of Irish and continental Catholics. On the solid body of the Scotch nation, I fear we make little impression: we have not broken through or penetrated their lines (perhaps we haven't tried to, but let that pass). Still there are always some "coming in out of the cold," from all classes; in any considerable town-parish. I think there are always some converts on hand, largely no doubt through marriage. In rural districts there is not much progress. There are several reasons for the Scotch backwardness.

(1) To begin with (besides the indifference to all religion, the gross naturalism, pride, ignorance, and other causes everywhere the same) there is the terrific age long hostility and hatred of Rome and its ways, ever deep down in the people's hearts and kept burning by the Protestant Reformation Society, the Hope Trust, the Knox Club, and the anti-Catholic agencies. The Scotch don't indulge in explosions like the Orangemen, but they are stolidly, doubly hostile. They make excellent converts when once genuinely convinced, but conversion is generally made very hard for them. Persecution and bigotry are rife; they are penalized, disowned, driven out, looked down upon.

(2) Very strong here is the idea of race prejudice in becoming a Catholic. "Mary-worship," the Pope, Mass, and other things who have gone to the fairly respectable (because theologic) objections to Catholicism, hardly count now-a-days at all, because hardly any Protestant knows anything about theology, either Catholic or Protestant. The objection now is that you are going back upon a decent father and mother (supposing they are decent) by "turning Irish." You become the blacksheep of the family, your name will not be mentioned by any sympathetic neighbor or visitor, or only in a whisper, like that of a son who has gone to the fair and has left the house or been "shipped." Then the "heartbreak to the mother" is played for all it is worth, and females especially feel all these sentimental appeals when attracted by the claims of Rome.

(3) And "Catholicism is Irish"—that is another terrible objection. The Scotch (except in the far north, where the Catholics, too, are Scotch) identify Catholicity with Irishry—inevitably, of course, since five-sixths of the faithful here are Irish. Now they don't like the Irish (except as fighters), and so they do not like the "Irish religion," which they think is not meant for the Scotch. If Catholicism were a Scotch thing, it would not be so bad. There's no use talking to them about the pre-Reformation religion of Scotland and about Wallace and Bruce and St. Margaret, and so on. They pretend not to believe or to know anything about their forefathers having been Catholic. "If they were, they shouldn't have been, and we had a Reformation to change them." "Stull, that proves that Catholicism was Scotch in those days, doesn't it?" "Well, that doesn't matter; we don't bother our heads about what our forefathers were, we don't want Roman Catholicism now anyway." And so there you are again. It is not a question of what is right or wrong in religion, it is a question of what I want, what will please me.

not favorable to "prosperity," and prosperity with a zeal is the one thing necessary.

(5) Then we have no stepping-stone, no halfway house here as in England towards the Catholic Church. Ministers aren't prepared their flocks by teaching Catholic doctrines and practices as the High Church clergy do so well across the border. A Catholicizing agency like the Anglo-Catholic "Society of St. Peter and Paul" would be inconceivable in the Presbyterian Kirk. The gulf between Presbyterianism and Rome is great, deep, unbridgeable; and it must be taken at one big, tremendous jump. Most people are too stiff to take it.

On the other hand, the War has done something to disillusion and educate a lot of people, especially the soldiers who have been serving in Catholic lands. What they have seen there has opened their eyes to the power and beauty of Catholicity. They can no longer identify it with a minority and with the underdog as in this country. They write home and tell about it. But I doubt whether it will all make much difference to the home staying Scotch, and I should think, from what I have heard, that quite a majority of Protestants now consider the Pope as pro-German—why, I don't really know.

One thing most consoling and greatly to the good, is the magnificent Catholic control of our own schools, and the united and determined front presented to the government by clergy and people on the school question—a burning one at present. This is one direction, and a very public one, in which the Church, small in numbers though it be, makes its power felt and known by the country at large. The uncompromising, immovable stand for principles on the part of a loyal Catholic people is something to be proud of, and must impress those who are not utterly impervious.

When all is said and done, the overpowering obstacle in the way of conversions in the terrific prejudice and demonical hatred against Catholicism, inherited and drunk in with their mother's milk. It is there in spite of you. People couldn't explain how they got it—perhaps they were never taught it. But it is in them, a part of their nature. And it is this that leads to the corollary obstacle, ignorance—for a man will not inquire about a religion that he hates—why should he? He does not know it because he does not want to know. What can be done? Something more than we have ever been made; and something must be done if there is to be any considerable progress. That, amidst the mountains of prejudice and bigotry, there are a good many who have ceased to believe in all forms of Protestantism and are heartily sick of it, and are well enough disposed to listen to the Catholic claims, I am quite sure. The best method of reaching them, without doing more harm than good, is the great problem. Scotland is not like England, still less like America. Yet no advance will ever be made without a certain amount of friction and opposition. We must make up our minds for that. Catholicity is ever a sign that shall be contradicted. May the Almighty lead us soon on to the right lines for bringing back the wandering sheep to the One Old and satisfying souls that are hungering and thirsting for the Truth!—The Catholic Convert.

CATHOLICS HONORED

In one issue of The Tablet of London, England, there is recorded the awarding of the Victoria Cross to no less than three Catholic soldiers. One of these, Private Wilfrid Edwards, of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, is a youth of twenty-four and a convert to the Church. He enlisted immediately upon the outbreak of the War and has been twice wounded. Another recipient is Quartermaster Sergeant William H. Grimmaldeston, King's Own Scottish Borderers, of Blackburn, who in the early days of the War had been severely wounded at Loos while assisting a comrade. The third recipient of the Cross was Private William Ratcliffe of the South Lancashire Regiment, who had won the Military Medal at Messines. The present decoration was bestowed for the valiant capture of a gun from the enemy. The same issue of our London contemporary gives particulars of thirteen recent cases of Catholic officers awarded the Military Cross.

NON-CATHOLIC'S PRAISE OF THE ROSARY

Among recent writers "outside the walls" to add their testimony in favor of the Church and her tenets must be placed Orison Sweet Marden, who writes thus appreciatively of the Rosary: "Those who are too narrow minded or too prejudiced to see anything good in a creed which is not their own, often sneer at the Catholic custom of 'saying the Rosary.' To them it is only superstition, nonsense, to repeat the same prayer over and over. These people do not understand the philosophy as well as the religion underlying this beautiful old custom. They do not know the power that inheres in the repetition of the spoken word and in the influence of the thought expressed."

Love does not linger in the home where rudeness shows its unlovely qualities. It chooses to dwell in the home where the spirit of unselfishness, of self-control, of thoughtfulness, and charitableness makes the atmosphere sweet.

The art of illuminating writing on vellum was carried to unrivaled perfection in the Irish colleges and monasteries, and the manuscripts of this class preserved in Dublin and London, facsimiles of which are now placed in many American public libraries, as well as those of European universities, bear witness to the high state of civilization attained by the Irish people during the peaceful and prosperous centuries that followed the coming of St. Patrick and continued until the demoralizing Danish invasion of the eighth century.

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