

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

THE HOUSE OF GOD IS THE PLACE WHERE WE CAN SAY IN THIS WORLD: "LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE"

In today's gospel we read that St. Peter exclaimed: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." We should all like to be able to say this; but is there no place on earth of which these words are true? Yes, indeed, there is, as we shall see if we reflect for a moment. We can use the same words in speaking of the church, the house of God, since here we find all that is necessary for our souls, the fulfillment of all our desires, the satisfaction of all our cravings.

1. Let us consider first the pulpit where I am now standing. You hear the most important and convincing truths proclaimed from this place; the glorious goal of all your efforts is revealed to you here, and you learn to know God in His infinite love and mercy and in His most perfect beauty. From this place you are taught the sole means whereby you can reach your eternal home in the world to come; you are warned of the allurements and snares of the world, you are tenderly corrected, when you have done wrong, and you are admonished and encouraged to be brave in your warfare against the enemy of your souls and to persevere in your resistance to his attacks. In this place the most attractive examples are set before you for imitation. Have not many words of comfort and edification been uttered from this pulpit? May we not truly say that it is good for us to be here?

2. In the second place, let us look at the Confessional. You all know what a terrible evil sin is; then consider our crucified Saviour, who tells you plainly enough how great the ransom is that must be paid in order to release us from sin. Think of the awful consequence of sin, which renders your souls liable to be cursed by God, which brings you to an abyss of misery, and exposes you to everlasting condemnation. If you are honest, you will have to acknowledge that sin makes you unhappy, very unhappy. The sinner is tortured by the ever-recurring thought: "I am no longer one of God's children," his conscience is never at peace, and he sees his own degradation and the depth to which he has fallen. If, however, he comes to confession, and with true contrition acknowledges his guilt, the heavy burden is at once removed from his heart, and he hears the words of absolution spoken by God's representative and ratified in heaven. He feels another man altogether; the heavy load of sin is gone, and his conscience no longer reproaches him; profound peace reigns in his soul and he is glad and joyful of heart, open to him. Such is the result of a visit to the Confessional;—may we not say therefore that it is good for us to be here?

3. Lastly, let us think of Jesus in the most holy Sacrifice of the Altar. What intense happiness it is to be near our Divine Saviour, to be able to remain close to Him, and to pray in His presence! We can come to Him at any time, and need never fear that He will refuse to welcome us. If you seek love, come to Jesus, for who is more loving, or more worthy of love? If you want a friend, come to Jesus, for He is the best and truest of friends, ever ready to help you, most patient and most powerful. If you need help, come to Jesus; for here is your best and mightiest helper and protector, your unfailing support. If your soul hungers and thirsts for refreshment, come to Jesus, for here He offers you to Himself, to be your food and nourishment. If you long for consolation, come to Him; He is the God of all consolation. If you want advice, you will receive here the best and most trustworthy counsel. If the world persecutes you, you will find refuge and shelter here. In short, there is not a single moment in life when your appeal to our Lord is in vain. Is it not true, then, that this is the place of which we must say that it is good for us to be here?

Yes, indeed, it is good for us to be here; let us resolve to come here frequently to hear the Word of Life. Come very often during this holy season of Lent, to gather strength and courage from the contemplation of our Saviour's sufferings. His love and His mercy. Visit the spot on earth where it is good for you to be; listen to God's word with devotion, and practise what you hear; go often to be cleansed in the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and unite yourselves worthily with Jesus at Holy Communion. If you do all this, you may be sure that some day our Lord will allow you, as He allowed Peter and James and John, to behold Him in His glory, and, when you enter eternity, you will be able to exclaim with truth: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; here will we abide and set up our tents for ever and ever." Amen.

NEVER WEARY OF VIRTUE

Sometimes we seem to tire of doing good; it is so monotonous. Ill health may be the cause of it; or it may result from a slur or an insult, or a slander that has reached our ears; it may arise from a desire for more attention and greater appreciation

of our efforts. No matter whence it comes, it is a danger and a temptation.

God never tires of our well-meant efforts; we must not tire of making these efforts for God. If results or satisfaction are not forthcoming, why trouble ourselves? God's angels record our deeds and note our intentions. It is better for us to be humbly submissive to God's will, than to be the most successful of his children.

Absence of trials, a clear path to the heights of virtue, a relief for religious practices is not God's usual way of rewarding faithful service. God's reward is a greater and heavier cross. Every cross is a crown begun, is an old saying.

Our Blessed Mother suffered most on Calvary, after Jesus, and she was the holiest witness of Jesus' death. Her reward for the most faithful service and most tender attention to Jesus was the blessing of suffering that our Lord bequeathed to her.

Never weary of virtue or lose heart, because a cross has thrown its shadow across your path. The cross leads to Heaven and Heaven is home.—St. Anthony Messenger.

PSYCHIC PROPAGANDA

Gerald C. Treacy, S. J. in America

The way of the Propagandist is familiar. The War has made it so. It is generally admitted that the Teuton received more than his due for skill in foisting his ideas on the nations of the world. The catchcry "German Propaganda" has been worked to death. For the Briton has more than outdistanced the Teuton in pushing British ideas to the fore. Witness the Peace Conference and its sequel, the League of Nations was at first an American idea. It was Wilsonian, but its soul came from a Papal letter. Without giving the Vatican credit Mr. Wilson put the Pope's peace propositions into a State document, the British cheered it at Paris, then Britonized it, and sent Mr. Wilson home to give it to the American people. "We must make the world safe by making small nations safe." Every American subscribed to that. But the safety of small nations did not mean those small nations still tyrannized over by a British army of occupation. To blind Americans to the real meaning of small nations, propaganda had to come in and show how useless it was to speak of Egypt, and India and Ireland, for these were domestic questions. The policy of propaganda is to obscure the main issue or begot the question in such a way that the propagandist's ideas are accepted, while the issue is railroaded into obscurity, and the main question is relegated into the realms of forgotten history.

Propaganda is closely akin to advertising. It differs from advertising in this that advertising to be successful must be grounded on truth. What is known as "fake advertising" in the business world may make a momentary success, but its ultimate failure is certain, for its very plain reason that Lincoln or Barzaum gain in his famous statement on the impossibility of fooling all the people all the time. But with propaganda it is different. Being a recent growth of a shell shocked civilization it is difficult to tell whether or not it can ignore truth or garble truth and achieve permanent success. Certainly it can win immediate and temporary victory and persuade a great many people that a half truth is a whole truth, and that if a movement can "seize the press and grip the book world and the magazine world, no matter how flimsy its foundations, the movement will go. How far it will go only history can answer.

It is patent fact to any one who has followed the recent movement of Spiritism that its twin sister is propaganda. And it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that neither war policies nor peace policies of any government in the world ever received the help of the propagandist to the extent that this modern cult has received it. Publishers and editors of magazines and newspapers in England and America are hand in glove with the promoters of Spiritism to convince a world still rocking on its foundations that "the New Revelation" has come. Not only is that true, but the individual Spiritist becomes almost immediately after allegiance to the cult an ardent propagandist. Very much like the victim of the drug habit, it seems a symptom of this modern mental disease to stimulate the addict to spread its poison. The old or the young wherever you meet them or wherever you find their printed statements, are burning with mania to spread their new ideas.

No better example of the propagandist spirit than that manifest in an article in the January issue of the Woman's Home Companion. Margaret Deland is in the third of her series of papers on the possibility of communicating with the dead. Her thesis runs in this wise: "If the normal explanation solves a few of the phenomena of Spiritism then let us put aside the supernatural explanation." So let us try the normal explanation on a few verified happenings." She thereupon proceeds to fit the "normal cap" on the phenomena of materialization and mediumship with the to be expected result that the cap does not fit. Then within a paragraph the writer suggests for an understanding of the matter discussed the reading of three

books, with Lodge, Holt and Myers as the respective authors. Her next reference to a book of psychic lore rises in the scale of fantastic propaganda, and gives the name of the publisher. Thereafter follows a very good story from the "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research" with a careful page reference. William James comes forward next in order with a startling tale about the death of his "Aunt Kate." All told there are nine books mentioned, some with the names of the publishers, and having read the books I can vouch for the fact that Margaret Deland has selected her passages wisely from the human-interest standpoint. The propaganda process is easily seen. The casual reader of the Woman's Home Companion gets some very interesting stories with reference to their original sources. The Deland article strikingly like all the Spiritistic articles today stimulates interest. The reader with or without any positive religious tenets finds an unknown field opening before his anxious gaze. It is an easy step from the magazine article to the book and from the book to the séance. And propaganda has triumphed with the conquest of a human soul destined to be the victim of an abnormal and unhealthy mental condition frequently leading to the madhouse.

The cruel thing about this Spiritistic propaganda is that it plays upon the most sacred human emotions. It guarantees to the bereaved that their beloved dead are not dead. "Here is the solution of the problem of life," cries the propagandist. "You can communicate with your dead, which proves that they are still living. Read these authentic cases of spirit contact and then try for yourself." Whether it is Basil King or Margaret Deland or any other magazine writer the lines followed are precisely the same. The article starts out to give an authentic proof that a soul that has died has come back to talk or deliver a message; it ends by giving a very interesting account of weird happenings, table tilting, levitations, automatic writings, voices out of the dark. And not in one instance is there proof of the instances cited where identity is proved. As identity is not proved the claims of modern Spiritism fail, but it is here that propaganda plays a strong hand. As the phenomena produced by Spiritistic means are very striking, the initiate or novice in Spiritism is assured that they are the result of the activities of the dead who are striving to communicate with the living. But where is the proof that these spirits are actually the forces at work? That they really are the spirits of "Raymond" or Meyers or any one individual that they claim to be? Propaganda answers with the rejoinder: "Sir Oliver Lodge has recognized his own speaking from the other plane, as he shows you in 'Raymond.' Do you realize that he is a scientist of eminence whose keenness of intellect is universally acknowledged? Can you with your limited intellect dare to doubt that he is right?"

So the last process in propaganda is the strongest. Men and women of position in the world of thought are falling in line with the new revelation. Can they be wrong? Or as Sir Conan Doyle puts his argument in his latest book, "The Vital Message": "It is possible to write down the names of fifty professors in great seats of learning who have examined and indorsed these facts and the list would include many of the greatest intellects that the world has produced in our time. Therefore the facts have been indorsed by the only science that has a right to express an opinion. I have never in my thirty years of experience known one single scientific man who went thoroughly into this matter and did not end by accepting the spiritual solution." This propagandist's triumph. In no other way can the real issue be obscured more cleverly than by clouding it with the say-so of great names. So in article after article containing Spiritism's message, there is the constant harping on the fact that the new movement has back of it the real thinkers of the world. To strengthen the word of the writer the lecture platform is to be used, and Americans have been invited to hear the great scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge, the foremost apostle of Spiritism, tell in his own words the reason for his allegiance to the cult. With good press-agenting and good management the Lodge lecture tour will give Spiritism a new impetus and propaganda will score another triumph.

Whether the movement is destined to go on gathering momentum as much rapidly as it did during war and post war days remains to be seen. Certainly there is but one force in the world to oppose it, and that force is the Rock of Truth that error has dashed against century after century, only to reverts and be broken. When Christ set the Rock strong in His strength it was not backed by the intellectuals of the world and its message was not forwarded by propaganda. It alone can answer the claims of Spiritism, and in its answer is Spiritism's defeat.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PAPACY

Men of learning, lovers of peace have long been seeking to create an institution which would be superior to the sovereign states, not so much in political power or authority as in the realm of justice and right. If two quarrelling individuals, we have been told time and time again, must be content to lay their cause before a court whose judgment they are bound to accept, two nations, two States should also find it possible to submit their controversies to some tribunal. We have long been familiar with such arguments and with efforts directed towards creating an institution which would embody the wishes of those earnestly seeking after relief from the evil they strive to overcome; such wishes have been expressed long before the World War. Whether these same characteristics apply with equal force to the labors of the Papacy in the interest of peace and the well-being of the nations.

The time from Leo III, who on Christmas Day in the year 800 crowned Charlemagne Emperor, down to the end of the reign of Boniface VIII, (1303) is the epoch of the greatest influence of the Church on the political life of the nations. Again and again, during that period, emperors and kings laid their quarrels at the feet of the Pope and let his judgment as arbiter; and in the coming to Rome for a settlement of controversies regarding the investiture of prelates and rulers, in matters of property, regarding the Crusades, in cases of insubordination of spiritual rulers, in the granting of fiefs, when questions of supremacy were involved, and in many other instances, not to mention those concerning the validity of marriage, etc. One may wonder what part of the Papacy one will; the epoch from 800 to 1303 marks the period of history during which the Church put into practice what is now being attempted.

THE POPES AS ARBITERS
What is now being attempted, what now looms up like a Fata Morgana deceivably near at hand has been realized centuries ago; the nations of occidental Europe had such an institution in the Middle Ages in the Papacy. And if at present a really effective international court is being spoken of as the greatest and loftiest and most beneficent characteristic of our present social institution, then these same characteristics apply with equal force to the labors of the Papacy in the interest of peace and the well-being of the nations.

PRESERVATION OF FREEDOM
A supreme Judge of the types represented by the Popes of those ages, who set bounds to the ambitions and desires even of kings and emperors, would likewise be the safest guardian of the liberty of nations. Freedom, liberty—frequently the watchword of those who seek to overthrow public order—are precious, priceless gifts, and must be safeguarded at all costs. But liberty is not license, or freedom from all restraint. Order is a child of liberty, and its helpmate is wise restraint. Such restraint is never tyrannical, whether it be the tyranny of the autocrat ruling by force, or that of the Jacobin mob.

History teaches us that occidental Europe only an unparalleled measure of liberty, while in the East, Roman Empire and later in Russia arbitrary absolutism reigned. The chief reason for this difference in development lies in the fact that the West had the Pope, and the East did not. The logic of this contention rests on the facts proven by history that when emperors, kings and presidents have a superior and recognize him as such, they cannot possibly become such tyrants as were the Cæsar-Papists, rulers in whom both spiritual and temporal power are united.

TRIBUNAL WOULD HAVE TO DO WHAT POPES DID

The Church has, in the past, shown herself a strong and prudent mother of all the people who have shared in her maternal blessings; State and nations have been her children as well as individuals. And the world, if she were permitted, exercise the same wholesome influence again over the powerful ones of the earth in behalf of all the people. The elder Archbishop Spalding once very properly reminded an opponent of the Papacy (Miscellanies, vol. 1, p. 56): "He should have borne in mind that, but for the efforts of the Popes and for the power they acquired in temporal matters by the free consent of the European nations, Europe would, in all probability, never have risen from barbarism nor progressed in civilization. That power was almost always put in requisition to check tyranny and to soothe the oppressed. The voice of Rome liberated the captive, struck off the chains of the serf, cheered the oppressed, and struck terror into the hearts of tyrants." Protestants have admitted all this.

Whatever international power, authority or tribunal may be established to protect the interests of all the peoples of the world, its functions would have to be the counterpart of those exercised by the Papacy in the past. Will the new power be able to act as impartially, as wisely and as efficiently as Rome did?

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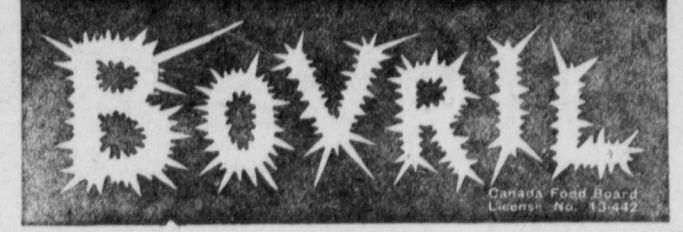
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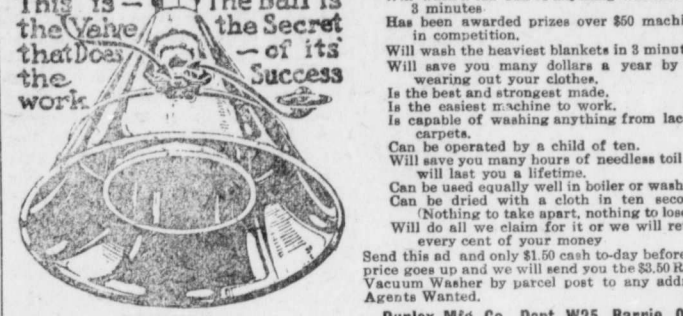
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