

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

A New Year's Sermon.

Rev. Joseph Timmins.

"Our days upon earth are as a shadow; and there is no stay." (Eccl. i, 2.)

Wise people regard their years of life as so many milestones placed along life's highway to eternity. Each year places its milestone, each year robs us of a friend. Time in its swift and ceaseless flight leaves behind it field, village and town, placing each year its milestone and finger boards along life's journey and inscribing each year its significant tablet on our hearts. So many years, so many milestones, so many finger boards. Which shall be the last you know not, neither do I. So we have lived another year, and so have taken another step towards life's goal, which is death, and the year which we now begin is perhaps the last milestone for some of us. We stand perhaps before the door of death, through which all must enter, but none ever returns. Has the journey been long? Ask the gray-haired old man, listen to the dying, who have reached the end of life's journey, and both will answer: "My life has vanished as if in a moment." Yes, our days upon earth are as a shadow; and there is no stay.

My dear brethren, we enter upon a new page in the world's history; we stand at one of the cross-roads of life; therefore let us take two very important questions for our consideration today.

First, I ask what passes by? and I answer time, and second, I ask what remains? and I answer eternity. Time flows rapidly by. Consider the stream of a fast flowing river; how it courses along its wide bed, never pausing for a moment; wave follows wave, the one drives the other before it, and what they cry out to the flowers growing along its banks is their perpetual farewell song, thus announcing their arrival and departure with a greeting. So, too, it is with time. With it there is no standing still, but ever a constant flight; one moment drives the other before it, and only two portions, the past and future, but no present for the very moment in which we now speak it has already changed its name from present to past. Thus, therefore, is time a constant flight of succeeding moments, each one dying the very instant it is born to give place to its successor. And, as time flies, so, too, do all things with it, as the heathen poet beautifully says: "Times change and we change with them."

Time has sprung from the abyss of nothingness. From there it has come into the world and therefore does it hurry with all its might to give back unto those things made in time to their first origin, thus having them back again to the abyss of nothingness from whence they first sprang. Look over the whole earth: on everything has time placed its seal and impressed everything with its stamp of mutability. It has written its name on that faded rose. And what are the words? They are these: "There was a time when this rose was fresh and beautiful; now it is quite otherwise." Time has placed its name on the old castle built on the hill. Where are those gallant knights and those noble ladies who were wont to look from the citadel's height on the beautiful valley below? All is still in those large halls which once echoed with shouts of laughter and merriment, and now the wild ivy twines itself along its deserted and crumbling walls. Time has inscribed its name on the old church yonder. Where is the architect, where the builder and the stone masons who sent of love for God's holy service built the high arch and tall tower, and where are the worshippers who a hundred years ago worshipped within these walls? Ah! the tower and arch still withstand the storm and rain, but the architect, with his assistants and the pious people have long since sunk into their graves, and no one knows their name or is able to point out their resting place. So the whole world is a large cemetery, and the vaster this if a graveyard, since everywhere over its surface are scattered the graves of the dead.

Time has written its name on the forehead of the aged. Once was this head young and beautiful; now it is stooped and bowed with the weight of years; rich locks of hair have fallen from him and now he is bare and his hair is like the winter's snow. See the candle before you; how peacefully its light burns; still all the while it burns it is consuming itself until finally it is extinguished. And so for man, his first step in life is at the same time his first step towards the grave. He cannot live unless at the same time he dies, and the more he lives the more he has died. As for time it gives him no rest, but bears him ever onward. When men meet they ask each other: "How are you? Where are you going?" We name this place and that, but it seems we wish to forget one place and that is the grave. So man journeys ever onward. There is no standing still for him; he goes forward with time and grows old with it. Man travels ever onward, but seems to forget in the words of Sacred Scripture that he is like the flower of the field that blossoms forth and is trodden under foot, and like a cloud scattered by the wind, he has no stay. The King must one day lay down his sceptre and crown and himself be laid in the grave. His vesture another will wear and on his throne will be seated his successor. The priest of God will ascend no more the altar and his good people will be instructed by another. Soon will they forget him, and become attached to their new pastor. Life is a stage on which each one for a brief period acts his part and then disappears, only to be followed by his successor, who puts on the purple garment just laid down, acts his part when he too disappears, and becomes as poor as the one who went before him. And so the figure of the world, says St. Basil, passeth away, since for it, as well as for time, comes a last and final day when both shall be no more.

And you, my dear brethren, do you wish to be an exception to the general law? Must you not go the way of all flesh, the way of your ancestors, your parents and your relations? A very

beautiful and practical story is told of an old monastery clock which had inscribed on its face these Latin words: "Una ex hanc"—one of these. Here was a most powerful sermon. In these words it said to each one who stood before it: "One of these hours is also your hour, shall be the hour of your death." After the clock has run a certain number of hours it stops running and stands still. You have an appointed number of hours which God has determined for you before your birth, and the ceasing of your heart calls off the number, day, and night, until it has counted the last hour. It counts the number fast, very fast, and when it has come to the last few heart beats it begins to beat very slowly and now it beats no more. So time goes and we go with it. "In the beginning," sings the Psalmist, "hast thou, O Lord, founded the earth and the heavens; the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest and all of them shall grow old like a garment. And as a vesture Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the self same, and Thy years shall not fail. The children of the servants shall continue and their seed shall be directed forever." (Psalms cii.)

The world, then, says the Sacred Scripture, shall perish, but we have still a second question to ask: "What remains?" And you answer: "There remains for us only God and eternity." Time is a creature of God, and since it has a beginning it has also an end. Not like God Himself, therefore is it as old as God Himself, without beginning and without end, and therefore also is it as unchangeable as God Who knows no change. There is in it no past and no future, but an ever-abiding present. Consider the terrestrial globe in its immeasurable greatness and let us suppose an ant making a journey around it. How often must it travel around the same before it has beaten a path, and how long would it have to continue before it had cut this world in two? Let us suppose it would take millions upon millions of years. Subtract this number from eternity, and how many years would still remain? Eternity in all its entirety, for after the lapse of all these years eternity has scarcely begun to exist. Take, again, all the men that have lived since Adam, who live now and all those who shall live till the end of time. Let the first of these begin to count the days and nights of their lifetime upon earth and the number of persons who have lived during this long period; then let those who are now living begin where the first have left off, and after these let those who are to live till the crack of doom continue in like manner. Now if we consider these days and nights and persons to represent each so many millions of years we shall have indeed an unspeakable sum of years. Subtract this immense number of years, and I ask what portion of eternity remains? and I answer as before, eternity is thereby not in the least diminished, but still remains in all its fullness.

What remains? God. Yes, God alone remains and His years know neither beginning nor end, and with Him remain His love and His justice. There remains the punishment of sin. It is an eternity, the eternity of hell. Woe to him to whom this punishment shall be decreed. Woe, therefore, to him who must endure this eternity. Hell remains, and just as it is impossible for God's justice to have an end, so also it is for the pains of hell to have an end. There remains God's love and bears with it an eternity, the eternity of heaven. Happy is he who will one day find his dwelling there. Happy, thrice happy, are all those who are permitted to stand round the throne of the Lamb with crowns on their heads and palm branches in their hands. Heaven remains where the face of the Most High is forever visible, whose sight ravishes the blessed and forms their happiness and where their joy and songs of jubilee are without end. And so eternity remains, a double eternity—the eternity of heaven and eternity of hell. What remains? Man and his works. We know that man's body is formed from the dust of the earth and must return again to dust, but his soul is born of God and must return again to God. The children of the servant shall continue and their seed shall be directed forever. Man remains, and with him his works. The storm of the sea drives wave upon wave before it, and what remains behind is either the mire or gold sand which is cast upon the shore. So, too, in the storm of life, what remains after the storm of life is over remains forever, and what is cast upon the shore of eternity is either the mire of sin or the gold sand of good works. Man has three friends. The first is his earthly possessions, which he must leave behind him; the second are his relatives and friends, who follow him to the grave, and his third friend are his good works, which alone follow him beyond the grave and accompany him to his Judge. There he stands mute and silent—his works, good or bad, represent him and shall determine his destiny for all eternity. Time is changeable; it flies rapidly by. Eternity is constant, it alone remains. What we have become in time, that we shall be for all eternity, so that during life we may be said to be either saved or lost. Therefore, I exhort you all to seize and make use of the moments of life, for on their wings depend eternity. Time is for us the birthday of eternity; each moment of it is worth an eternity, since in a moment of time may be gained or lost an eternity. Oh! what would the damned give for a single moment of time, since in it they could by a sigh and an act of contrition deliver themselves from their torments? And it shall never be granted them. And we who have now these moments of time, shall we suffer them to pass by unemployed.

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and so have cause throughout all eternity to sigh in vain for a few moments of time? Choose now while there is still time. During these days you wish each other a happy New Year, but I wish you one and all something of far more value—I wish you a happy and blessed eternity. Amen.

DR. CRAPSEY ON MODERNISM.

Dr. Crapsey of Rochester was for many years a minister of the Episcopal Church until his theological speculations raised a suspicion of his orthodoxy and he was charged with being in antagonism with the principles of his Church. An ecclesiastical jury sat on him, and the charges being verified he was deposed. His authority to preach his private judgments in the name of his Church was denied.

But the doctor is an energetic man, clever, a good talker, and had a goodly number of admirer followers in his congregation. He therefore set to work to establish a new organization which, doubtless, he hoped would evolve and develop in time into a new Church. He secured a hall and continued giving forth his theological speculations and views on men and things to those who assembled to hear him.

The Pope's late Encyclical on Modernism was too interesting and important a subject to pass without catching his vigilant eye. It did, and he recently gave out his meditations upon it. It is on some points in these meditations that we propose to come to a conclusion. We put a hall and continued giving forth his theological speculations and views on men and things to those who assembled to hear him.

Dr. Crapsey: "The Church's principle of teaching rests not upon internal truth, but upon the principle of external authority."

Just what the doctor means by "internal" truth is not clear. Does he mean truth as known to the mind by the operation of the mind's own powers, and exclusive of the action of all agencies external to it?

It so seems to us that his investigations into the origin of ideas and of knowledge have not been profound as he would have us believe. He has not a hall and continued giving forth his theological speculations and views on men and things to those who assembled to hear him.

We do not think he will risk an affirmative answer. He will say with all philosophers of note, that the mind comes to a knowledge of the world outside it by means of the five physical senses. They are its only witnesses, its sole authority, without which the universe cannot become a subject of thought. It is by the authority of the senses that the mind can begin to think, that is, to reason about the universe in which we live.

Thus the mind begins its journey towards knowledge by accepting the authority of the senses. Reject their authority and you can know nothing, think nothing about the things of science.

It follows then that the principle of authority, with which Dr. Crapsey credits the Church, is the principle, principle or starting point, from which the mind sets out to acquire knowledge. Deny the validity of authority as a means to the truth and you isolate the mind from the universe of things, and leave it in a vast and awful solitude, unknown and unknowing. It is by the authority of the senses that the mind comes in conscious touch with the universe of things, and knows that anything save itself exists. Hence a denial of this authority of the senses closes the way to all knowledge of things and renders knowledge impossible. It remains then that in the last analysis the way to knowledge is the way of authority other than reason itself. Some authority must therefore be accepted as a necessary condition to the acquisition of knowledge.

What then, must we reject reason and trust to authority in our search after truth? By no means. Reason and authority are co-operative; each pre-supposes the other. The authority

(of the senses) addresses reason—the mind—and gives it the materials, the data, necessary to its action. And reason must accept that authority before it can have a thought of the universe outside it; it must accept it or remain forever quiescent, like a fly in amber. Reason of itself cannot supply the materials, the data, on which it acts. They are given to it by some agent other than self, whose authority must be accepted as a condition of thought. Like the millstones, it grinds out the wheat that is given to it.

The main function of the individual thinking principle called reason, is to think. It must think things, for it cannot think nothing. But things cannot become present to its consciousness except by the instrumentality and authority of the senses. Hence again the necessity of authority to thought concerning things. When we speak of the senses we refer to them as external authority, for they are as much external to the mind as is the farthest telescopic star.

But a word or two more about Dr. Crapsey's rejection of external authority and his appeal to what he calls "internal truth" as the only medium to the acquisition of knowledge. As we can only guess at his meaning we assume that by "internal truth" he means some truth as known to his mind, that is, something that he is persuaded is true. But how did he come to a knowledge of this supposed truth which he would make the criterion or standard? Take for instance his knowledge of astronomy. Did he evolve it from his own internal consciousness, or did he, on the authority of his senses, learn it from some astronomical professor, whose authority he accepts? Move as he will he meets with authority on which he must depend for the validity of his knowledge of things. In the present case he depends on the authority of his senses for the existence of the professors and then on the authority of the professors for the facts of astronomy.

Again, if the mysterious or vague thing which he calls "internal truth" be a valid guide for him it is equally internal to others, and equally a valid guide or light to them, like the sun that shines for all. On this hypothesis, why does he assume to teach others, having no better guide or light than they? What need is there of him as a teacher of his fellow men? Why not leave them to see things in their head light of "internal truth"? Is this new lamp not as luminous for them as for him? It is to this sincere that the doctor's theory consigns him.

Dr. Crapsey: "It is now personal intelligence that is the power which has come in contact with the principle of authority."

"Personal intelligence" is an abstraction, a universal that has no real existence except as an attribute of some real thing or person, as whiteness, stupidity, mortality. No action can be attributed to such abstractions, and consequently they cannot come into contact or collision with the Church. We assume, then, that by "personal intelligence" he meant the intelligence, mind, or judgment of a greater or less number of persons. But why speak of this as of some new power that now comes in contact with the Church? Is this "personal intelligence" something that has recently come into existence, like electric lighting? Have not the minds of some people been in contact or collision with the Church from the beginning? Are they not as ancient as mosquitos and gophers? Why then say now as indicating a new state of things? Is it because the doctor's own collision with his church is a thing of recent date? He mistakes if he imagines that little affair has changed the attitude of the "personal intelligence" of the civilized world towards the Church.

There are several other things in Dr. Crapsey's lecture suggestive of comment. But enough for the present.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

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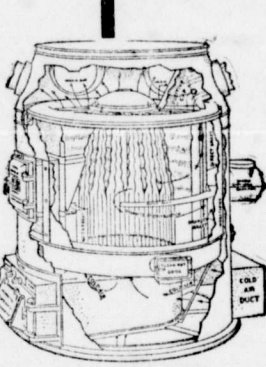
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