

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. M. BOSSAERT

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In today's Gospel our divine Lord shows us what the true spirit of penance is. The proud Pharisee who considered himself to be a model of all virtues, extolled himself even in his prayer, reckoning up his good works and despising other people, whilst the publican approached the house of God with awe and reverence, not venturing to go near the holy place, but standing afar off, overwhelmed by the consciousness of his sins. He did not dare to lift his eyes towards heaven and the God whom he had so often offended, but struck his breast and said with deep contrition: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Our Saviour added by way of comment: "I say to you, this man (i.e., the publican) went down into his house justified rather than the other: because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbly himself shall be exalted."

What important lessons are contained in this parable! As long as we think ourselves righteous and flatter ourselves that we do good works and are better than our neighbors, we are devoid of the true spirit of penance, and shall not obtain from God forgiveness of our sins. But as soon as we recognize our sins, and humble ourselves, striking our breasts and saying like the penitent publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner," then we may hope for forgiveness.

1. The first thing essential to true penance is acknowledgment of guilt, without which repentance is impossible, and without repentance there can be no forgiveness. How can I be sorry for doing something that I do not regard as wrong? How can I correct what I do not recognize as evil? We cannot attain to a proper knowledge of our sins unless we examine our conscience at least once in each day, remembering the commandments of God and of the Church and thinking of our duties as human beings, as Christians and as workers to compare our actions with these commandments and duties, in our particular calling. We ought to do so frequently. If we go to the Sacraments only three or four times in the course of the year, and then merely in a careless, indifferent manner, living otherwise without any serious thought at all, it is scarcely possible in a few minutes to do a thorough examination of conscience to be able to say truthfully: "I know myself." No, let us not be deceived; to know oneself is not so easy a matter that it can be accomplished without any exertion, and without keeping a careful watch upon all one's actions. Our perverse self-love makes us blind to our faults, for it represents our sins as too slight to deserve punishment and as quite excusable. Sometimes it even suggests the pitiable pretext that there are many worse than ourselves. This is what the Pharisee meant by saying: "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men."

2. For our repentance to be genuine, however, it is not enough for us to recognize our sins, but we must also confess them. This is why our Saviour instituted the holy Sacrament of Penance, in order that those who were not ashamed to offend God by sin, might also not be ashamed to confess their sins to the priest acting as God's representative. Hence St. John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." It would be the height of folly not to reveal our sins to the priest in the holy tribunal of penance. How can a sick person expect to recover who will not reveal his malady to a physician, ready and able to help him, but insists upon declaring himself to be in good health, whereas he is really ill? Let no miserable human respect keep us away from the Sacrament of Penance. You should fear God, not man; for God is able not only to kill the body, but to cast the soul also into destruction. Never forget that after death and again at the last day we shall have to account, not to men, but to God, the all-holy, from whom nothing is hidden.

Let us therefore lay aside all our pride, and in true humility and contrition of heart acknowledge that we are sinners, and confess our sins and shortcomings in the holy tribunal of penance. Like the publican in the gospel, let us strike our breasts, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Not unless we have such dispositions shall we obtain forgiveness of our sins, and recover the peace of heart that we have lost; not unless we are truly contrite shall we be justified before Him who has redeemed us, and who is now our Mediator and the refuge of sinners—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Amen.

THE HYPOCRITE

He who wears the veil of hypocrisy and thinks he can deceive the rank and file of mankind with his disguise cannot continue to fool the many who, with the shrewd insight of human nature, quickly penetrate the delusion and bring him to mortification. He cannot deceive himself. He must find himself sooner or later torn by an anguish of contrition. He wishes he might retrace his steps; but it is too late. He made his choice long ago and there is no retraction.—The Guardian.

CHRIST THE REDEEMER

The greatest drama that has ever been produced, the most stupendous and, without a doubt, the oldest is that of man's redemption from sin. It is as old as man and will continue until man ceases to exist. Its first scene was laid in the Garden of Eden; its last will be in the Valley of Josaphat, where all men will be judged. All the world is its stage and all men and women the players. Each one comes on in his turn, plays his part and then retires, until the final curtain. It need not be said that the principal part is played by Christ Our Lord. In the character of Redeemer, His influence has been felt from the very beginning, and it runs on through the whole production right to the very end, when He shall assume His final role of Judge of mankind. Each man is rewarded or punished according to what he has played his part. If he has acted well and followed the directions laid down for his guidance, then a reward will be his; if poorly, he will be punished. It behooves each one, then, to do his best in the short space of time that is allowed him.

The curtain rises and the scene presented is that of a most beautiful garden. Here we see all manner of trees and flowers, all kinds of birds and animals. Everything appears peaceful and happy. Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, are the sole custodians of this beautiful land. It has been given to them by God to be used as they wish. They are lords and masters of all they survey. Everything is theirs, everything with the exception of one thing. There is a tree that grows in the midst of the garden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and it has been forbidden to them to eat of its fruit. They are satisfied to obey this command. But after a time Satan, envious of their happiness, tempts them under the guise of a serpent to defy God's command. The bait that he throws out to catch them is the promise that they will then become as gods, knowing all things. Eve consents, takes the fruit and eats of it. Unfortunately, Adam follows her example.

THE CHANGE

Immediately the scene changes. The Garden of Paradise is no longer a land of peace and happiness. Sin has entered and with sin has come the attendant train of evils. A bright close will fall only on the last day. Meanwhile, the actors act their parts well or badly and retire to receive their reward or punishment privately. But at the end there will be a final reckoning when the whole company will appear before the Principal Character sitting in judgment in the Valley of Josaphat. Their merits will be judged from the manner in which they have supported Him in His great role of man's Redeemer. We have called it a drama but how realistic it all is and how much more realistic it will appear on that last day of final reckoning.—The Tablet.

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cry out in her liturgy: O happy fault of Adam that has merited for us so great a Redeemer! He was perfectly willing to suffer and die in order to save us. For this is the only way that it could be done. Gold and silver could not ransom us from the power of the devil. Our redemption could not be bought. It had to be wrought. And it could be wrought only through the sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb of God. Our redemption was accomplished by this act of self-immolation when Christ offered Himself to be sacrificed on the wood of the Cross.

But this scene of the Crucifixion does not mark the end of this great drama. The play goes on. The final curtain that will close on the last day will fall only on the last day. Meanwhile, the actors act their parts well or badly and retire to receive their reward or punishment privately. But at the end there will be a final reckoning when the whole company will appear before the Principal Character sitting in judgment in the Valley of Josaphat. Their merits will be judged from the manner in which they have supported Him in His great role of man's Redeemer. We have called it a drama but how realistic it all is and how much more realistic it will appear on that last day of final reckoning.—The Tablet.

TEACHING AND PROSELYTISM

James J. Walsh, M.D., Ph.D.

It so happens that just as we begin the scholastic year there are some very apt quotations with regard to teachers and teaching that should prove not only interesting but valuable for those engaged in educational work. At least they will stand as a warning to instructors as well as to pupils, with regard to that very large borderland which consists almost entirely of opinion. Formerly opinions that reached far beyond the scientific premises on which they were supposed to be founded, had their place mainly in physical science, but with the increase of attention to the ethical and social sciences a new field for the exploitation of opinions, rather than of science, has been opened. As a consequence a great many instructors, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes quite deliberately, and for proselytizing purposes, teach opinions that have been rejected by the great majority of thoughtful people.

In an article in the Educational Review, under the title "Is American Higher Education Improving?" President Nicholas Murray Butler has emphasized the situation that has thus been created in American institutions of learning. He says: "Too many American college and university teachers of today are proselytizers for some particular philosophy of life. They are not content to teach, but feel under the obligation to preach as well. To the discriminating student such preaching of social and political doctrine does little harm, because he takes it only at its proper value. The less discriminating student, however, and particularly the women students of today, are sadly imposed upon by lecture-room talk of that sort. The good teacher understands the distinction between what he himself knows and believes and what it is wise and proper for him to teach the young and immature student. The poor teacher, on the other hand mixes all these things up together."

President Butler's warning has its main reference to the superficial sen-

sation-mongering teacher intent on attracting attention, yet it is surprising how often even the good teacher, or at least the man who knows one subject very well and thinks he knows all the others, will be ready to express emphatically opinions on subjects quite outside of his specialty. These opinions of course carry a very great deal of weight with his students or with those who either have no apparatus for critical judgment or have their critical faculties disarmed by a show of learning. Specialism is prone to just such disadvantages. The dean of the graduate department of an important eastern university once called a specialist "A man who knew so much more about one thing than he knew about anything else, that he thought he knew more about it than anyone else did."

To which someone has ventured to add "and he is inclined to think that if he gives any thought to any other subject he will know more about that than anyone else does." It is men of this kind who work great harm on the unformed minds of students, and, as President Butler thinks, though I should scarcely venture to be so positive, on the impressionable minds of the young women of our day.

As I began to say, it is surprising how often even good teachers, that is, good in the sense of being capable in their special subject, allow themselves to be carried away into the expression of opinions far beyond their scientific knowledge. In an article in Studies, the "Irish Quarterly Review of Letters, Philosophy and Science," September, 1917, Alfred Rahilly has called attention to how far beyond his knowledge Huxley went with untrained audiences in his expressions of belief in evolution. A Jesuit student who attended his lectures, said to him one day: "For several months now I have been attending your course, and I have never heard you mention evolution, while in your public lectures everywhere you openly proclaim yourself an evolutionist." "Here in my teaching lectures," answered Huxley, "I have time to put the facts fully before a trained audience. In my public lectures I am obliged to pass rapidly over the facts, and I put forward my personal convictions, and it is for this that people come to hear me."

This is an astounding admission. However, in the popularization of science, personal convictions far outstrip scientific conclusions and are sensational because they are far beyond what was supposed to have been knowledge before. One would scarcely expect Huxley and men of his caliber to stoop to this, and yet the temptation is so great that it is not so surprising to find that they actually do it. When Darwinism and the descent of man from the monkey—which has now been entirely abandoned and never really had a foothold in serious science—were in vogue, Huxley wrote of his lecture to workmen: my workmen stick to me wonderfully, the house being fuller than ever last night. By next Friday they will all be convinced that they are monkeys." Such impositions on simple audiences are indeed disturbing, especially when one realizes how many opportunities there are to influence impressionable students in our universities.

Nor did Huxley conceal from his scientific friends his attitude in this matter, but rather gloried in it. He wrote to Hooker: "I went in for the entire animal more strongly in fact than they have reported me. I told them, in many words that I entertained no doubt of the origin of man from the same stock as the apes. And to my great delight, in saintly Edinburgh itself, the announcement met with nothing but applause."

Virchow complained very bitterly that scientists in Germany were following Huxley's example. Men were using the prestige of their names as scientists to teach things that were not scientific. They were looking forward confidently to the discovery of the truth of certain things, but were anticipating the actual discovery to teach those things very em-

phatically. As their anticipations of discoveries were not fulfilled they were actually teaching things that were not true. There was nothing that irritated Virchow more than expressions that indicated a belief in current popular scientific notions with regard to phases of evolution, and particularly Darwinism. There was no one in England of sufficient prestige in science to tell Huxley what he thought of his imposition on popular ignorance, but Virchow did not hesitate to tell Haeckel just what this sort of teaching meant. Above all he insisted that such teaching would bring science into disrepute.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century Brunetiere invented the expression "the bankruptcy of science." What he meant was that the claims of science in the latter part of the nineteenth century had been so extravagant that at last its credit had been weakened because it could not meet its obligations, and the consequence had been distrust of scientific declarations. Nearly a quarter of a century before Brunetiere's expression of opinion Virchow in his famous Munich address, "The Freedom of Science in the Modern State," had declared:

"Nothing has been more hazardous in the natural sciences, nothing has more damaged their progress and their place in the esteem of the people, than a premature synthesis, that is, a premature connecting of scientific elements as yet discrepant, a leaping to conclusions without the justification of observed relations. Gentlemen, let us not forget that when the public see a doctrine which has been exhibited to them as certain, established, positive and claiming universal acceptance, proved faulty in its very foundations or discredited by the most important of its essential and chief tendencies, many a false faith in science. Then they break forth into reproaches at the scientists. Ah, you yourselves are not quite sure. Your doctrine which you call truth today is tomorrow a lie. How can you demand that your teachings should form the subject of education and come to be a recognized part of our general knowledge?"

The discredit of science is of course a serious consideration and should have a special appeal to those deeply interested in knowledge. This is not nearly so serious, however, as the perversion of thought for the young minds involved. As a consequence of such false learning ideas are graven deeply and are practically never corrected. They often prove the background of a great deal of future thought.

Now that the ethical and social sciences are occupying so much attention in the university, it is particularly important that proselytism should not take the place of teaching nor tinge teaching so as to make for the propaganda of particular doctrines. This is exactly what is likely to happen, however, no matter how distinguished a teacher may be, unless there is some definite authority to whom teachers are responsible and unless, too, that authority makes it a point to be thoroughly aware of the matter taught and of the manner in which it is taught. It is this fact that universities are coming to recognize more and more. The War has precipitated a crisis in certain institutions and the whole problem of authority in teaching is coming up once more. The doctrine of freedom of thought, the four hundredth anniversary of which as a definite philosophy of life is being celebrated this year, has run its course, and it is now beginning to be rather clearly appreciated that what is called liberty often degenerates into a claim for license. Freedom is a wonderful thing, but there can never be freedom to do or to teach wrong.

Only when teachers are willing to submit to authority definitely exercised is there any assurance of such guardianship of teaching as will preserve it from unfortunate divergences. What Huxley was doing in exaggerating the significance of certain phases of biological science half a century ago, a great many teachers are doing in exaggerating the significance of their own favorite

phases of social and ethical science in our time.

Those who are prone to wonder why the Catholic Church has insisted both on establishing her own schools and on rounding out her teaching in college and university life will find ample explanation of it in this series of incidents that covers the last half-century. A great many Catholic parents are prone to think that after all comparatively little harm can come to their children at secular institutions after a thorough early training in Catholic principles and practice, yet here is a series of warnings not from Catholics, but from educators intent on protecting youth from vicious propagandists.

Fortunately the proper appreciation of this need for authority over teaching has led Catholics to send their young folk ever more and more to Catholic institutions where they may be assured of the supervision of the principles taught. There are now more than three times as many students in our Catholic colleges as there were some twenty-five years ago, and attendance at them has

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increased twice as fast as the general college student enrollment throughout the country. In spite of this there still remain many Catholics who are willing to risk the teaching of secular institutions. The expressions of those who are viewing from the standpoint, not of religion but of a proper exposition of the philosophy of life, make the lesson worth while.

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