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DISCOURSES TO MIXED CONGREGATIONS. BY JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, PRIEST OF THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI. DISCOURSE V.

SAINTLINESS THE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE.

You know very well, my brethren, and there are few persons any where who deny it, that in the breast of every one there dwells a feeling or perception, which tells him the difference between right and wrong, and is the standard by which to measure thoughts and actions. It is called conscience; and even though it be not at all times powerful enough to rule us, still it is distinct and decisive enough to influence our views and form our judgments in the various matters which come before us. Yet even this office it cannot perform adequately without external assistance; it needs to be regulated and sustained. Left to itself, though it tells truly at first it soon becomes wavering, ambiguous, and false; it needs good teachers and good examples to keep up to the mark and line of duty; and the misery is, that these external helps, teachers and examples, are in many instances wanting.

Nay, to the great multitude of men they are so far wanting, that conscience loses its way and directs the soul in its journey heavenward but indirectly and circuitously. Even in countries called Christian, the natural inward light grows dim, because the Light, which lightens every one born in the world, is removed out of sight. I say, it is a most miserable and frightful thought, that in this country, among this people which boasts that it is so Christian and so enlightened, the sun in the heavens is so eclipsed that the mirror of conscience can catch and reflect few rays, and serves but poorly and scantily to preserve the foot from error. The inward light, given as it is by God, is powerless to illuminate the horizon, to mark out for us our direction, and to comfort us with the certainty that we are making for our eternal home. It was intended to set up within us a standard of right and of truth; to tell us our duty on every emergency, to instruct us in detail what sin is, to judge between all things which come before us, to discriminate the precious from the vile, to hinder us from being seduced by what is pleasant and agreeable, and to dissipate the sophisms of our reason. But, alas! what ideas of truth, what ideas of holiness, what ideas of heroism, what ideas of the good and the great, have the multitude of men? I am not asking whether they act up to any ideas, or are swayed by any ideas, of these high objects; that is a further point; I only ask, have they any ideas of them at all? or, if they cannot altogether blot out from their souls the ideas of greatness and goodness, still, whether their mode of concerning them, and the things in which they embody them, be not such, that we may truly say of the bulk of mankind, that "the light that is in it is darkness?"

Attend to me, my dear brethren, I am saying nothing very abstruse, nothing very difficult to understand, nothing unimportant; but something intelligible, undeniable, and of very general concern. You know there are persons who never see the light of day; they live in pits and mines, and there they work, there they take their pleasure, and there perhaps they die. Do you think they have any right idea, though they have eyes, of the sun's radiance, of the sun's warmth? any idea of the beautiful arching heavens, the blue sky, the soft clouds, and the moon and stars by night? any idea of the high mountain, and the green smiling earth? O what an hour is it for him who is suddenly brought from such a pit or cave, from the dull red glow and the flickering glare of torches, and that monotony of artificial twilight, in which day and night are lost, is suddenly, I say, brought thence, and for the first time sees the bright sun moving majestically from East to West, and witnesses the gradual graceful changes of the air and sky from morn till fragrant evening! And oh! what a sight for one born blind to begin to see—a sense altogether foreign to all his previous conceptions! What a marvellous new being, which, though he could hear before and touch before, never had been able, by the words of others, or any means of information he possessed, to bring home to himself in the faintest measure! Would he not find himself, as it is said, in a "new world?" What a revolution would take place in his modes of thought, in his habits, in his ways, and in his doings, hour by hour! He would no longer direct himself with his hands and ears, he would no longer grope about; he would see; he would at a glance take in ten thousand objects, and what is more, their relations and their positions, the one to the other. He would know what was great and what was little, what was near, what was distant, what things converged together, and what

things were ever separate, in a word he would see all things as a whole, and in subjection to himself as a centre.

But further, he would gain knowledge of something closer to himself and more personal, than all these various objects; of something very different from the forms and groups, in which light dwelt as in a tabernacle, and which excited his admiration and love. He would discover lying upon him, spreading over him, penetrating him, the festering seeds of unhealthiness and disease in their primary and minutest forms. The air around us is charged with a subtle powder or dust, which falls down softly on every thing, silently sheds itself on every thing, soils and stains every thing, and, if suffered to remain undisturbed, induces sickness and engenders pestilence. It is like those ashes of the furnace, which Moses was instructed to take up and scatter in the face of heaven, that they might become ulcers and blisters upon the flesh of the Egyptians. This subtle plague is felt in its ultimate consequences by all the blind as well as those who see; but it is by the eyesight that we discern it in its origin and in its progress; it is by the light that we discern our own defilement, and the need we have of continual cleansing to rid ourselves of it.

Now what is this dust and dirt, my brethren, but a figure of sin? so subtle is its approach, so multitudinous in its array, so incessant in its solicitations, so insignificant in its seeming, so odious, so poisonous in its effects. It falls on the soul gently and imperceptibly; but it gradually breeds wounds and sores, and ends in everlasting death. And as we cannot see the dust of the earth that has settled on us without the light, and as that same light, which makes us to see it, teaches us withal by the very contrast with itself, its unseemliness and dishonor, so the light of the invisible world, the teaching and examples of revealed truth, bring home to us both the existence and also the deformity of sin, of which we should be unmindful or forgetful without them. And as there are men who live in caverns and mines, and never see the face of day, and do their work as they can, by torch light, so there are multitudes, nay whole races of men, who, though possessed of eyes by nature, cannot use them duly, because they live in the spiritual pit, in the region of darkness, "in the land of wretchedness and gloom; where there is the shadow of death, and where order is not."

There they are born, there they live, there they die; and instead of the bright, broad, and all-revealing luminousness of the sun, they grope their way from place to place with torches, as best they may, or fix up lamps at certain points, and "walk in the light of their fire, and in the flames which they have kindled;" because they have nothing clearer, nothing purer, to serve the needs of the day and year. Light of some kind they must secure, and when they can do no better, they make it for themselves. Man, a being endowed with reason, cannot on that very account live altogether at random; he is obliged in some sense to live on principle, to live by rule, to profess a view of life, to have an aim, to set up a standard, and to take to him such examples as seem to him to fulfil it. His reason does not make him independent, (as men sometimes speak) it forces on him a dependency on principles and laws, in order to satisfy its own demands. He must, by the necessity of his nature, look up to something; and he creates, if he cannot discover, an object for his veneration. He teaches himself, or is taught by his neighbor, falsehoods, if he is not taught truth from above; he makes to himself idols, if he knows not of the Eternal God and His Saints. Now which of the two, think you, my brethren, have our countrymen? have they possession of the true object of worship, or have they a false one? have they created what is not, or discovered what is? do they walk by the luminaries of heaven, or are they as those who are born and live in caverns, and who, strike their light as best they may, by means of the stones and metals of the earth?

Look around, my brethren, and answer for yourselves. Contemplate the objects of this people's praise, survey their standards, ponder their ideas and judgments, and then tell me whether it is not most evident, from their very notion of the desirable and the excellent, that greatness and goodness, and sanctity, and sublimity, and truth are unknown to them; and that they do not, only not pursue, but do not even admire, those high attributes of the Divine Nature. This is what I am insisting on, not what they actually do or what they are, but what they revere, what they adore, what their gods are. Their god is mammon; I do not mean to say that all seek to be wealthy, but that all bow down before wealth. Wealth is that to which the multitude of men pay an instinctive homage. They measure happiness by wealth; and by wealth they measure respectability. Numbers, I say, there are, who never dream that they shall be rich themselves, but who still at the sight of wealth feel an involuntary reverence and awe, just as if a rich man

must be a good man. They like to be noticed by some particular rich man; they like on some occasion to have spoken with him; they like to know those who know him, to be intimate with his dependants, to have entered his house, nay to know him by sight. Not, I repeat, that it ever comes into their mind that such wealth will one day be theirs; not that they see the wealth for the man who has it may dress, and live, and look like other men; not that they expect to gain some benefit from it; no, theirs is a disinterested homage, it is a homage resulting from an honest, genuine, hearty admiration of wealth for its own sake, such as that pure love which holy men feel for the Maker of all; it is a homage resulting from a profound faith in wealth, from the intimate sentiment of their hearts, that, however a man may look, poor, mean, starved, decrepit, vulgar; yet, if he be rich, he differs from all others; if he be rich, he has a gift, a spell, an omnipotence, that with wealth he may do all things.

Wealth is one idol of the day, and notoriety is a second. I am not speaking, I repeat, of what men pursue, but what they look up to, what they revere. Men may not have the opportunity of pursuing what still they admire. Never could notoriety exist as it does now, in any former age of the world; now that the news of the hour from all parts of the world, private news as well as public, is brought day by day to every individual, I may say, of the community, to the poorest artisan and the most secluded peasant, by processes so uniform, so unvarying, so spontaneous, that they almost bear the semblance of a natural law. And hence notoriety, or the making a noise in the world, has come to be considered a great good in itself, and a ground of veneration. Time was when men could only make a display by means of expenditure; and the world used to gaze with wonder on those who had large establishments, many servants, many horses, richly-furnished houses, gardens, and parks; it does so still, but it has not often the opportunity, for such magnificence is the fortune of the few, and comparatively few are its witnesses. Notoriety, or, as it may be called, newspaper fame, is to the many what style and fashion; to use the language of the world, are to those who happen to be within their influence; it becomes to them a sort of idol, worshipped for its own sake, and without any reference to the shape in which it comes before them. It may be an evil fame or a good fame; it may be the notoriety of a great statesman, or of a great preacher, or of a great speculator, or of a great experimentalist, or of a great criminal; of one who has labored in the improvement of our schools, or hospitals, or prisons, or workhouses, or of one who has robbed his neighbor of his wife. It matters not; so that a man is talked much of, and read much of, he is thought much of; nay, let him have even died justly under the hands of the law, still he will be made a sort of martyr of. His clothes, his handwriting, the circumstances of his guilt, the instruments of his deed of blood, will be shown about, gazed on, treasured up as so many relics; for the question with men is, not whether he is great, or good, or wise, or holy; not whether he is base, and vile, and odious, but whether he is in the mouths of men, whether he has centered on himself the attention of many, whether he has done something out of the way, whether he has been (as it were) canonized in the publications of the hour. All men cannot be notorious; the multitudes who thus honor notoriety, do not seek it themselves; nor am I speaking of what men do, but how they judge; yet instances do occur from time to time, of wretched men, so smitten with the passion for notoriety, as even to dare in fact some detestable and wanton act, not from love of it, not from liking or dislike of the person against whom it is directed, but simply in order thereby to gratify this impure desire of being talked about, and being looked at. "These are thy gods, O Israel!" Alas! alas! this great and noble people, born to aspire, born for reverence, behold them walking to and fro by the torch-light of the cavern, or pursuing the wild fires of the marsh, not understanding themselves, their destinies, their defilements, their needs, because they have not the glorious luminaries of heaven to see, to consult, and to admire!

But oh! what a change, my brethren, when the good hand of God brings them by some marvellous providence to the pit's mouth, and so out into the blessed light of day! what a change for them when they first begin to see with the eyes of the soul, with the intuition which grace gives, Jesus the Sun of Justice, and the heaven of Angels and Archangels in which He dwells; and the bright Morning Star, which is the Blessed Mary; and the continual floods of light falling and striking against the earth, and transformed, as they fall, into an infinity of hues, which are the Saints; and the boundless sea, which is the image of divine immensity; and then again the calm, placid Moon at night, which images His Church; and the silent stars, like good and holy men travelling on in lonely pilgrimage to their eternal rest! Such

was the surprise, such the transport, which came upon the favored disciples, whom, on one occasion, our Lord took up with Him to the top of Tabor. He left the sick world, the tormented restless multitude, at its foot, and He took them up, and was transfigured before them. "His face did shine as the sun; and His raiment was white as the light," and they lifted up their eyes, and saw on either side of Him a bright form; these were two Saints of the elder covenant, Moses and Elias, who were conversing with Him. How truly was this a glimpse of heaven! the holy Apostles were introduced into a new range of ideas, into a new sphere of contemplation, till St. Peter, overcome by the vision, cried out, "Lord, it is good to be here; and let us build three tabernacles." He would have kept those heavenly glories always with Him; every thing on earth, the brightest, the fairest, the noblest, paled, and dwindled away, and turned to corruption before them; its most substantial good was vanity, its richest gain was dross, its keenest joy a weariness, and its sin a loathsomeness and an abomination. And such as this in its measure is the contrast, to which the awakened soul is witness, between the objects of its admiration and pursuit in its natural state, and those which burst upon it when it has entered into communion with the Church Invisible, when it has come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to that multitude of many thousand Angels, and to the Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just now perfected, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament. From that day it has begun a new life: I am not speaking of any moral conversion which takes place in it; whether or not it is moved, (as surely we believe it will be,) to act upon the sights which it sees, yet consider only what a change in its views and estimation of things there will be, directly it has heard and has faith in the word of God, as soon as it understands that wealth, and notoriety, and influence, and high place are not the fruit of blessings and the standard of good; but that saintliness and all its attendants, —saintly purity, saintly poverty, renouncement of the world, the favor of heaven, the protection of Angels, the smile of the Blessed Mary, the gifts of grace, the interpositions of miracles, the intercommunion of merits,—that these are the high and precious things, the things to be looked up to, the things to be reverently spoken of. Hence worldly-minded men, however rich, if they are Catholics, cannot, till they utterly lose their faith, be the same as those who are external to the Church; they have an instinctive veneration for those who have the traces of heaven upon them, and they praise what they do not imitate.

They have an idea before them, which Protestants have not; they have the idea of a Saint; they believe, they realize, the existence of those rare servants of God, who rise up from time to time in the Catholic Church like Angels in disguise, and shed around them a light, as they walk on their way heavenward. They may not do what is right and good, but they know what is true; they know what to think and how to judge. They have a standard for their principles of conduct, and it is the image of a Saint which makes it. A Saint is born like another man; by nature a child of wrath, and needing God's grace to regenerate him. He is baptized like another, he lies helpless and senseless like another, and like another child he comes to years of reason. But soon his parents and their neighbors begin to say, "This is a strange child, he is unlike any other child;" his brothers and his playmates feel an awe of him, they do not know why; they both like him and dislike him, perhaps love him much in spite of his strangeness, perhaps respect him more than they love him. But if there were any holy Priest there, or others who had long served God in prayer and obedience, these would say, "This truly is a wonderful child; this child bids fair to be a Saint." And so he grows up, whether at first he is duly prized by his parents or not; for so it is with all greatness, that, because it is great, it cannot be comprehended by ordinary minds at once; but time, and distance, and contemplation are necessary for its being recognised by beholders. And, therefore, this special heir of glory of whom I am speaking, for a time at least, excites no very definite observation, unless indeed (as sometimes happens) any thing of miracle occurs from time to time to mark him out. He has come to the age of reason, and wonderful to say, he has never fallen away by sin. Other children begin to use the gift of reason by abusing it; they understand what is right and good, only to go counter to it; it is otherwise with him,—not that he does not sin in many things, when we place him in the awful ray of divine purity; but that he does not sin willfully, and grievously,—he is preserved from mortal sin, he is never separated from God by sin, nay, perhaps, he is betrayed only at intervals into any deliberate sin, he is ever so slight, nor has he any habits of lesser or venial sin, or is he watching and resisting them. He ever lives in the presence of God, and is thereby pre-