

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

LOW SUNDAY

FAITH AND SKEPTICISM

"If we receive the testimony of men the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, which is greater, because He has testified of His Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself." (1 John 9, 10)

God made man in such a way that he depends, to a great extent, upon others for his knowledge. He cannot acquire it intuitively; but, by patient labor and listening, it is engrained in him. This in itself would be sufficient proof of how far below Himself has the Maker placed man, the noblest of His earthly creatures. God is omniscient. No creature can possess this attribute; consequently, even though an individual be capable of acquiring a knowledge of many things, there still remains an infinite amount of which he can know nothing, while dwelling in the flesh.

As regards temporal things, man shows but little skepticism when told of the things of which he hitherto knew little or nothing; but, with many, it is a different question when an attempt is made to impart to them a knowledge of the things of God. It is true that faith is necessary for a proper and sufficient knowledge of God here below, and this faith is infused by God in those who possess this greatest of earthly blessings. Many place their own minds against that of their Creator, and refuse to believe anything they cannot understand, or which human knowledge—either their own or that of others—can not teach them.

They may become learned, to a great extent, in the sciences of earth, and manifest signs of great education. But they are not lifted thereby above the things of this world; and, as long as they remain in this state—no matter how meritorious their lives may be from a natural standpoint—they are not acquiring one whit of merit before God.

Belief in God is necessary before all else; an even those who profess no belief in Him during life, unconsciously resp. ever and anon, the fruits of His beneficent existence and presence in the world. It is pride—the cause of the fall of both angels and men—that keeps them aloof from their Master. A natural outgrowth of pride is a feeling of self-sufficiency, and very often Satan aids one to feel, at least, that he can and does exist without the help of God. It is one of his clever ways of deceiving man, and of causing him to walk on an apparently elevated plane, but from which, in the end, he will step to an abyss of misery. Every mortal is a creature of God, belongs to Him, and, sooner or later, must abandon helplessly into the hands of God that which now appears as sufficiency.

This belief in God also is essential considering the great blessings God has bestowed upon us, not only by creating us and enabling us to share in His happiness, but also by redeeming us from our bondage by the sufferings and death of His own beloved Son. Herein is contained the greatest exhibition of truth and sincerity that man ever could witness. Ages come, ages go, but man remains ever the same. With the aid and help of the knowledge of past generations, and that of the present great age with its discoveries and inventions adding immeasurably to the conveniences of life, he is not brought one step higher in a spiritual sense, if he refuses belief in God, and neglects the duties he owes to Him. In fact, all these things, wrongly interpreted by many, have been the means of continuously distancing great numbers from God. In the narrowness of their comprehension and the pride of their lives, they have believed, and still believe, that happiness will consist in perfecting these benefits to man, and this to come about with God eliminated from the process.

It is true that since the coming of the Son of God, more believe than did before His advent. Yet, through the wicked schemes and designs and pride of various heresies, the faith in Him has been blighted, and its bright glow, in the case of many, still refuses to shine forth. The unshaken faith of the early Christians has not come down through the centuries to all in its purity. The various influences antagonistic to it have not been without results, and now it is difficult to find the simple faith of the ancient true lovers of Christ. Of course, this is said mainly of people outside of the pale of the Catholic Church, but, even within her most sanctified walls, there are many who stand aloof, pass judgment on her doctrines and practices, and offer her a very unwilling obedience.

But the testimony of centuries stands by her and with her. The impress of God's goodness and help is evident upon her, and her great sanctifying influence attested to by the lives of millions of her children. Yet, in the face of all this, there is but too often to be found a weakling bearing the name of "Catholic." It is said to think that such should be the condition of some within the Church, yet it is not surprising, for, if the good Master Himself had to bear insults and ingratitude, can the Church, His spouse, expect to be free of sorrow?

Will man ever try to master the lesson that he needs God—whether he presends to realize it or not? His very existence is due to God; his present and his future are in God's hands. His knowledge—no matter how comprehensive—is but a slight spark of God's infinite knowledge;

and if he expects happiness beyond this life, it can be only in a share of the very happiness of God.

THE PRIMACY OF PETER

By John P. Sutton

I have again become the recipient of a typewritten tract from some unknown person. The latest one is headed, "Was St. Peter Ever Bishop of Rome?" The writer attempts to prove that he was not. The first of these tried to fool people into the belief that the present Protestant "by law established" Church of England is the same as that which existed in England before the so-called Reformation. It purported to have been written by the Rev. A. Corbett. This latest tract does not give the name of the author, but it has such a self-satisfied way of putting assumption for accepted fact, and such a knowledge of dogmatic style of argument, that I am led to believe that both were written by the same person. He begins by saying that Peter "was not the 'Rock' upon which Christ said He would build His Church but Himself as the Son of the Living God; secondly that St. Peter's keys consisted wholly of a special privilege to open the Kingdom of God to Jew and Gentile; and thirdly, that the New Testament clearly shows that Peter had no office, prerogative, or supremacy beyond the other apostles."

According to general understanding, and as declared by I presume, every English dictionary, the word "special" means distinctive, and the word "privilege" means a personal advantage. It follows that special privilege and prerogative are synonymous terms. Therefore, according to my reverend friend's logic, Peter had a prerogative, and Peter had not a prerogative. He finds it all in the New Testament. We read in the gospel of St. Matthew (16:16, 20): "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

My reverend friend says the rock meant Christ Himself. That kind of camouflage might do if the gospel of Matthew had been written in English, but it so happens that the original version was written in Aramaic, the dialect spoken by Our Saviour and the Apostles. In the Aramaic language the word "Cephas" means "rock," of which the Latin equivalent is "petra," a noun of the first declension and feminine gender. When used of the name of a man, it becomes masculine, a noun of the second declension, and of the masculine gender. In the original Aramaic tongue the text is literally: "Thou art a rock (Cephas, Latinized Petrus) and upon this rock (Cephas, Latinized Petrus) I will build My church. The only meaning we can coherently extract from words so plain and unequivocal is: "Simon, henceforth thou shalt be called Rock, and upon this rock I will build My church." As God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, and that of Jacob to Israel, so He changed Simon to Rock, which we translate Peter, from the Petrus of the Latin Vulgate. The statement of my reverend friend that the words meant: "Thou art a rock and upon myself I will build My church" is a pure delusion. Able non-Catholic critics and scholars have long since given up as untenable any other sense of the text than that held by the Catholic Church, viz: "Thou art Peter and on this rock (Peter himself) I will build My church."

Now we come to the Keys: "And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." These words we must remember were spoken by Christ to Peter and to Peter alone; upon Peter the Church is to be built, and to Peter is to be given the power of binding and loosing on earth and in heaven. My reverend friend draws upon his prolific imagination, and tells us the power of the keys thus given exclusively to Peter "consisted wholly of a special privilege to open the Kingdom of God to Jew and Gentile." "Whatever" is a broad and mighty word, and my reverend friend cannot compress it within the limits of a mission to preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile.

Now let us see if we cannot find one or two more prerogatives that were conferred upon St. Peter above his brother apostles. In St. Luke's gospel describing the heart to hear talk of Our Divine Lord with His apostles, on the night before His passion, we read (22:31, 32) that even with the foreknowledge of Peter's denial and repentance, He chose him to confirm the faith of the other apostles.

And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behind Satan hath desired to have you (plural) that he may sift you (plural) as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."

Of the twelve men, Peter was selected to be the Pope, made infallible by the omnipotent prayer of Christ Himself, and to be the authority to which all should have recourse in matters concerning the faith. And in the face of this my poor, blind, reverend friend says, "the New Testament clearly shows that Peter had no office, prerogatives or supremacy beyond the other apostles."

On the last occasion of Christ's appearance to His apostles after His resurrection, as related by St. John

we read (21:15, 17): "When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He had said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me? And he said to Him: Lord Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed My sheep."

Let me say to my reverend friend in the words of St. Bernard, referring to the above texts: "For to whom, I do not say of the bishops, but even of the apostles, have all the sheep been confided? For to whom, absolute and universal as this Peter if thou lovest Me feed My sheep? And to what sheep does He allude? Is it of a particular people, of a city, of a country, or a kingdom? No He simply says My sheep. Who sees not that He does not merely designate some of them, but all taken together?" The scriptures could hardly be more explicit in declaring Peter the rock upon which Christ built His church, the one whose faith was never to fail, the one who was appointed to confirm His brethren, and finally the one who was to be the shepherd of all Christ's sheep. Many more instances might be cited from the New Testament showing Peter's prominence above the other apostles.

My reverend friend asks the question: Was St. Peter ever Bishop of Rome? He answers it in the negative, and proceeds to bolster up his argument with quotations from the New Testament and alleged admissions by Cardinal Gibbons and the Catholic Encyclopedia. Then he concludes with an incoherent whoop to the effect that "From all this, it is clear to the intelligent mind that the Roman claims to Supreme Universal Jurisdiction based on Peter's episcopate as 'first Pope,' Infallibility, etc., are founded not upon a 'Rock,' but upon a sand-heap." He must have felt good when he recovered his breath after that whoop. I hate to puncture his pretty bubble, but truth is inexorable, so I will allow some of his Protestant brethren, who undoubtedly possess intelligent minds, to do the work. First I will say that there is not a word in the New Testament to prove that Peter was Bishop of Rome. Neither is there a word in the New Testament ordering the followers of Christ to observe Sunday, the first day of the week, the Sabbath of Saturday, the seventh, the Sabbath of the Old Law. The statement that St. Peter was Bishop of Rome is based, like Sunday, on tradition. Let me tell my reverend friend, also, that the same tradition is not convertible term for "an unhistorical story or legend."

I will cite first Rev. Philip Schaff, D.D., a high-class Protestant divine and historian. In his "History of the Christian Church," he says:

"It is the uniform tradition of the eastern and western churches that Peter preached the gospel in Rome and suffered martyrdom there in the Neronian persecution. So say more or less clearly, yet not without admixture of error, Clement of Rome (who mentions the martyrdom but not the place) at the close of the first century; Ignatius of Antioch distinctly; Dionysius of Corinth, Irenaeus of Lyons, Cyprian of Rome in the second century; Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, Tertullian, in the third; Lactantius, Eusebius, Jerome, and others in the fourth. To these patristic testimonies may be added the apocryphal testimonies of the pseudo-Petrine and pseudo-Clementine fictions, which somehow connect Peter's name with the founding of the churches of Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth and Rome. However these testimonies from various men and countries may differ in particular circumstances, they can only be accounted for on the supposition of some fact at the bottom; for they were previous to any use or abuse of this tradition for heretical or for orthodox and hierarchical purposes." Dr. Schaff then adds in a note: "The presence of Peter in Rome was the universal belief of Christendom till the Reformation."

It was denied first in the interests of orthodox Protestantism against Romanism by U. Valentinus (1520). * * * On the other hand the presence and martyrdom of Peter in Rome is affirmed not only by all the Roman Catholics but also by many eminent Protestant historians and critics, as Bleak, Credner, Oleshausen, Gieseler, Nesuder, Rothe, Thierach, Kraft, Ewald, Plumpe and even by Hilgenfeldt.

In his work, "Early Christians in Rome," Vary Rev. H. D. M. Spence Jones, M.A., D.D., Dean of Gloucester in the Church of England, after summing up the evidence of St. Peter's residence in Rome, says: "The writer of this study has no doubt whatever that the teaching of the vast majority of Roman Catholic writers on this point is strictly accurate and that St. Peter, at a comparatively early date, probably somewhere about the year of grace 42-3, came to Rome confirmed in the faith—taught—strengthening with his own blessed memories of his adored Master—the little band of Christians already dwelling in the capital of the Empire. Under his pious training the little band, in the six, seven or eight years of his residence in their midst, became the

nucleus of the powerful Church of Rome."

I could quote Harnock, the German critic, Bishop Lightfoot of the Church of England, Cave, Pearson, Whiston, Young, Blondel and others, all non-Catholic writers and men of learning, whose researches have convinced them that St. Peter's residence and martyrdom in Rome are incontrovertible facts, and give an affirmative answer to my reverend friend's question, "Was St. Peter ever Bishop of Rome?" They arrive at a conclusion which is the very opposite of that which my reverend friend grandiloquently says is "clear to the intelligent mind." I would say to my reverend friend, that when a man's mental vision is jaundiced by prejudice everything he sees is tinged with the same color.

THE SHORTAGE IN THE MINISTRY

Some of our non-Catholic friends have some very interesting prophecies to make during the late War. Of one thing they were very sure, and that was that the Pope had a great opportunity in not openly declaring his adherence to the Allied cause. They were quite convinced that Catholicism was going to experience a great decline after the victory would be won. These gloomy predictions have not been fulfilled. There is one very practical proof that our friends were entirely mistaken in their opinions.

The supply of men for the ministry is one of the surest signs of religious health. When any locality is unable to obtain vocations, it is safe to say that something is wrong. In those parts where faith flourishes there is an over abundance of candidates for the ministry. The surplus is able to supply missionaries for other parts of the world. It is reported that in France and England, the countries that took the greatest part in the War, prior to the entrance of the United States, the Catholic seminaries are overflowing. In England it has become necessary for the Catholic Church to provide temporary quarters to accommodate the increased number of students. The Jesuit order alone has reported sixty-five extra students for whom it is desired to obtain housing. In France we hear that men of the highest position in the army are taking the humble place of ecclesiastical postulants.

With our non-Catholic friends conditions are quite different. In England the ranks of the Episcopal clergy are depleted by the shortage of supply of new men. Those that remain at their posts are bitterly complaining of their lack of adequate financial support, in view of the increased cost of living. In this country we may take the evidence of conditions from the pages of the "Living Church."

In a leading article this week, the editor does his best to be optimistic, but he is faced with the experienced testimony of five deans who direct eastern seminaries. The gentle editor has issued a leaflet calling attention to the serious condition of affairs. They gave the following statistics: In 1916 our five eastern seminaries had 256 students; today they have 179 students. In 1916 there were 466 candidates for the ministry and in 1919 there were 306. In 1916 there were 692 postulants and in 1919 there were 393.

It is true that the editor finds fault with the numbers quoted for candidates and postulants for the whole of the Anglican Church, but he is unable, of course, to dispute the actual number of those that are studying in the five eastern seminaries. Moreover, he himself quotes his own figures to show that the proportion of candidates for the Episcopal ministry has been diminishing for many years. He states that in 1826, the ratio of ordinations to communicants was one for every 234. In 1916 (before the War) the ratio was one for every 2,035 communicants. Today things are admittedly much worse. If we apply the figures of the five deans of seminaries to this diminishing ratio, it would appear that it is now reduced to one in every 3,000 communicants.

But even these figures do not tell the whole story. On the testimony of an Episcopal bishop (quoted by the "Living Church") who has kept careful statistics for a term of thirty years, it appears that only 17% of the clergy in his own diocese came from American Episcopal families! This would now reduce the proportion given above almost to the vanishing point. The bishop also observed that 34% of his ministers were natives of the British Isles; 27% were Canadians; 6% came from other foreign countries; and 10% were Americans brought up in other Protestant churches. This would seem to indicate that the Episcopal church produces very few young men who are desirous of entering the ministry. And yet this ministry is so attractive in itself that it draws men from other countries, and other affiliations into its membership. This is a difficult thing to explain. The natural solution is that the Episcopal laymen are of worldly inclination. They are able to pay well for a ministry that they do not care to enter themselves. Since the War they have shown still less inclination to devote their lives to this work.

The renewed enthusiasm for the Christian ideal that is manifesting itself amongst Catholics, who took part in the War, has not made itself felt in the Episcopal Church in this country. There is no disguising this fact. Remember, too, that the young

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Anglican clergyman is confronted with no great sacrifice. He is practically a free man. He is at liberty to choose his field of labor, and in the present dearth of clergymen he can obtain work without any difficulty. Should he decide to abandon the ministry at any time, no one will think the worse of him. He is bound by no lifelong vows. He may marry, and usually marries well, for young women of means are well persuaded that a clergyman is a desirable husband. His education is easily obtained. All the Episcopal seminaries have numerous bursaries. And yet he refuses to volunteer. Surely the only explanation that will elucidate the situation is the fact that very few Episcopal young men have found their religion of sufficient interest to awaken their ideals. The American Episcopal Church is saved for the most part by its own ministry; often of inferior education, who find in this country an opportunity that would be closed to them in their own.—Catholic Standard and Times.

CATHOLIC GROWTH

The custom of confirming adult converts during the Octave of Pentecost at the Cathedral was happily instituted some years ago by His Eminence the Cardinal. Each year has seen a notable increase in the number of converts in this diocese. Last year the sacrament of Confirmation was administered to one thousand converts. The story of conversions recorded in the various dioceses of the country is the story of the phenomenal growth of the Catholic Church in the United States.

A century ago there were in this country one bishop, fifty priests and 40,000 Catholics. Today there are 2 cardinals, 13 archbishops, 88 bishops, 20,000 priests and more than 20,000,000 Catholics. The conversions vary from 30,000 to 50,000 a year. Among the converts are numbered many prominent men, and each year heralds the conversion of noted bishops and clergymen of different denominations.

The recent statistics published by Stranfield show the progress that the Church has made throughout the world during the last century. The United States is not alone in recording remarkable increases in the number of Catholics. Catholics in creased in the last century from 120,000 to 2,000,000 in England, from 6,000,000 to 20,000,000 in Germany, from 16,000 to 150,000 in Roumania, and from 15,000 to 44,000 in Greece, in Australia there were no Catholics a century ago. Since the missionaries were allowed to penetrate into that country in 1820 the Church in Australia has grown steadily to that today, Australia has one cardinal, two archbishops, 1,600 priests and more than 1,500,000 Catholics. In missionary countries the number of Catholics is increasing every day. From a handful of Catholics in 1810 the Church in Africa has grown to number more than a million. In Asia there are today about 5,000,000 Catholics, of whom more than a million are in the Chinese Empire.

The marvellous diffusion of the Christian religion was in the early days due to causes both human and divine. Without the assistance of God's grace and without the abiding presence of Our Divine Saviour guiding and sustaining the mustard seed growth the Christian religion never would have been able in a few short years to encompass the limits of the known world. Without the zeal and devotion of Christian people through whom God performed this miracle the world never would have become Christian. Today the same causes are operative. The piety of the faithful, the zeal of the Church's ministers are potent in planting and watering the seed. But it is God who gives the increase. We should thank God for His goodness in bringing so many thirsting souls to the fountain of life, but we should be careful also to keep ourselves ever as fitting instruments through which God may see fit to work the grace of conversions. The increasing number of souls emerging from the encircling gloom to the kindly light of faith in this diocese, in the country, and throughout the world is therefore a manifestation of God's goodness and mercy, and a tribute to the sterling faith and fervent devotion of Catholic people.—The Pilot.

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