

## FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. F. PEPPER

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall." (Luke 11, 17)

Our Lord was proving that He did not drive out devils by aid of the devil, and pointed out that wherever strife, emulation and division prevail, desolation and destruction must inevitably follow. He took as His illustration a kingdom divided against itself, the people being engaged in civil war; and He argued that it was impossible for the devil to be helping Him to drive out devils.

These words may, however, teach us another excellent lesson, viz.: that if we suffer discord to reign within us, we must expect nothing but misery. Yet, as we have seen, this inward disturbance only comes when there is a state of disquiet of mind, in spite of the enjoyment of temporal prosperity. We want to serve God without denying ourselves; we accuse ourselves again and again of our faults, repent of them and mourn over them, and then commit them afresh.

This discord entered into us with original sin, since which time, as St. Paul says, the flesh has been warring against the spirit; and we can overcome this inward disturbance only by the grace of Him Who had crushed the serpent's head. It ceases to torment us when what is good and noble in us has obtained permanent dominion over what is evil and base. If with our whole mind and strength we are in union with God, peace and harmony will reign in our hearts and make us happy, for we shall be freed from that inward discord that drags us this way and that, now to what is good, and now to what is evil, and is an incessant source of restlessness and spiritual misery.

If we wish to avoid this inward discord and discontent, this sense of unhappiness at heart, we must be resolute. First of all try to ascertain clearly what God wants of you; for where there is no real recognition of His will there will be constant uncertainty and questioning whether we ought to do this or that; and in such a state of doubt determined action is impossible. A man wandering in the dark in an unknown locality, cannot take a decided step forward. We need in the first place, a definite knowledge of our duties, and our reason will enable us to obtain this. It is, therefore, most essential to avail ourselves of every opportunity of developing our reason. The less training is bestowed upon our reason, the more apt is our imagination to run riot, and imagination is never a safe guide to tell us our duty. We may strive in vain to be pious if we allow our imagination to decide what is our duty; for it is easily influenced by sensuality and self-love, it is ready to take a false view of things and to regard what is absolutely wrong as permissible, or even as good and noble. No inconsiderable part of modern literature bears witness to this truth, for barefaced wickedness is often represented as harmless and justified, whilst the moral teaching is so distorted, and absurd eccentricities so highly praised as genuine virtue, that it is really no wonder if uncritical readers store up in their minds the most contradictory views regarding morality. The peculiar moral teaching in such books is no whit better or less injurious than downright immorality. Even if the teaching has a good tendency, making for virtue and piety, it is not on that account much less dangerous than if it diverges altogether from the right path; perhaps it discovers sins where there are no sins, and makes exaggerated demands upon its victims, plunging them into deep depression, because he is unable to comply with these demands, and by robbing him of all courage, it leads him astray from what is good. A truly religious training of the intellect is most essential to give us clear and definite principles regarding our duty. When you have once recognized something as a duty, pleasing to God, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" (II. Tim. ii. 1).

When you have made a good resolution, be true to yourselves and to Christ; do not waver to and fro. Doubts may arise within you and various opinions and temptations; hours may come when you are inclined to change your mind, since what appeared at first to be right may seem doubtful and uncertain. Do not yield to these temptations; renew your resolution that you formed after due deliberation and after earnest prayer.

To act in one way to-day, and in another to-morrow—to now to-day and to root up to-morrow—to build to-day and to pull down to-morrow—all this leads to nothing, especially in striving after piety. If we go on in this way, one day will pass after another and the day of our death will find us as devoid of merit as the day of our birth. Be strong to resist all fickleness that is due to our own changes of mind.

Be strong, too, against fickleness due to outward influences. It is not much good to have a pious heart if it is not at the same time steadfast. If it were our lot to be always with friends like ourselves, anxious to lead good lives, then it would be easy enough to be good. If we always had a hand to guide us, or a voice to warn us, our own way of determination might be replaced by that of others. But a Christian has to go out into the world and stand his ground there. It is not difficult to

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be resolute in quiet retirement, but to abide by what has once for all been recognized as a right, although countless voices reject it as foolish, false and ridiculous—that is a difficult task. The world has often been compared with a market, and the comparison is apt. Especially at the present time there is so much confusion of opposing theories, each man wishing to draw attention to his own, so that, unless we cling fast to Jesus Christ, we shall be hopelessly bewildered. One person extols as a virtue what another scorns as folly; and one calls noble what another denounces as mean. As a rule all the rabble on the market place are of one mind only when they can abuse the Catholic Church and despise true virtue. If you do not accustom yourselves, when you are young, to hold fast what you know to be good, caring nothing for taunts and mockery, and not being credulous in contradiction, you are only too likely to adopt one perverse doctrine after another, and to become the plaything of all in turn. You will let yourselves be persuaded that black is white, and white is black, and finally you will not know what you ought to believe and do, and you will be aware in the depths of your hearts that you are not in union with God, and your souls will be distracted with that anxiety and discontent that are so common nowadays, because without Jesus there can be nothing but discord in our hearts.

How can we overcome want of resolution in ourselves and of weakness in face of temptations and false teaching from without? "If God be for us," says St. Paul, "who can be against us?" (Rom. viii, 31), and this thought is our comfort and strength. By means of earnest prayer, renewal of good resolutions, and constant efforts to increase our knowledge of our holy religion, we may steady ourselves, and God will give us strength and not allow any one to be at variance with his better self, but will help us to act as we think, and always to think in a way pleasing to Him. He will warn you when false principles are likely to

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mislead you; He will help you to unite true piety with steadfastness of purpose. "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall." Every soul that is really united with God, and determined to continue one with Him, will be a kingdom of God and an abode of His grace. No cunning, no deception and no malice will succeed in robbing such a soul of its faith and goodness; it will serve God with inward peace until He calls it to our everlasting home. Amen.

## TEMPERANCE

WHAT RUSSIA GAINS BY PROHIBITION

When the British Chancellor of the Exchequer makes formal announcement in Parliament, as of knowledge, that Russia, by suppressing the sale of all alcoholic liquors, has increased the productivity of her labor between 30 and 50 per cent. others than the Prohibitionists may well give serious attention to the results of this new war measure.

Only in a country with a Government like Russia's, of course, could the use of intoxicants be summarily stopped without regard to public sentiment, and only where excessive drinking was as nearly universal as, according to all reports, it was there, would the effects upon the efficiency of labor and the increase of national resources be as great as even the lower of the two figures mentioned by Mr. Lloyd George. Still, it is fairly presumable from the Russian experience with a prohibition which, for the present, at least, really prohibits, that the consequences of similar action elsewhere would be of like character, their lesser quantity or extent being merely proportionate to the prevalence of intemperance.

If this view be accepted, and it is supported by recent laboratory experiments that proved beyond question the diminution of both physical and mental efficiency by even moderate indulgence in alcohol, the economic argument for total abstinence can hardly be answered. That is not quite the same thing, however, as saying the demand for prohibition by law is wise and should be granted. In free countries that depends on the state of public opinion. Wherever public opinion is strongly in favor of prohibition, prohibitory laws can be and are enforced. Elsewhere their benefits are dubious, or more than dubious, and it is an unfortunate fact that though in theory majorities rule here, in reality, well-organized and persistent minorities not infrequently can compel the passage of laws without the desirable preliminary of general consent to their enforcement.—N. Y. Times.

## CHANGE OF MIND IN OREGON

The State of Oregon has gone for prohibition by many thousand votes. The women were a large factor, doubtless, for a majority of them were known to be "dry," but it is probably true that more men also voted "dry" than "wet" at the election. In any event it is a remarkable reversal of the verdict of 1910, when the State declared against prohibition by more than 20,000 in a total vote of a little more than 100,000. It is clear that the State has in four years decidedly changed its mind.

The people of Oregon have rendered judgment against the saloon as an institution rather than against liquor. Possibly there can not be a general use of liquor without the saloon; but it is certain that there can be no saloon without liquor. The effort in Oregon now, where the manufacture and sale of liquor is to be prohibited after July 1, 1916, is primarily therefore to abolish the saloon. Just what will take its place, if anything, remains to be seen; but no one for a moment can possibly think that the war on the saloon or on liquor is over.

## NEED OF FATHER MATHEW SOCIETIES

In the annual report of Attorney-General Fellows, of Michigan, for the year ending June, 1914, may be found the following:

"By far the greater number of prosecutions, 9,811, were for drunkenness, of which there were 9,552 convictions. There are many other prosecutions resulting from the use of liquor."

"This but confirms what thinking people have noted for some years," says the Michigan Catholic, i. e., that the evil of intemperance is on the increase, and here in Michigan there is much misery caused through the excessive use of liquor. Sad to relate the sin of intemperance is rampant in some Catholic centers, especially in the factory districts, and although pastors in general work assiduously to counteract the great evil, there is urgent need of Father Mathew societies if we want to rear Catholic youth a credit to themselves and to the community. Indulgence by parents and a too close companionship with brazen acquaintances is the cause of much dissipation among youth. At this moment a revival of Father Mathew temperance societies all over Michigan would work wonders for the betterment of young people and would be a boon to parents and suffering wives and sisters."

## THE DUTY OF CATHOLICS

In these perilous times when bigots are industriously circulating false charges against the Church, it behooves Catholics to be on their guard and not give scandal or afford the enemies of the Church an opportunity to blame her for their discreditable conduct. But this negative attitude

is not enough; good Catholics should give positive evidence of loyalty to the Church and her teaching in their daily lives. They should not be ashamed to be seen attending Mass, approaching the sacraments frequently, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, lifting their hats on passing a church, making the sign of the cross before meals, even in public places, answering those who would slander their religion, saying their prayers before retiring, even in the presence of non-Catholics, upholding at all times, the honor of the Church as they would that of their mother, etc., etc. There are a thousand and one ways in which Catholics, without obtruding their religious principles unnecessarily, can show that they are proud to be numbered among the dutiful sons of Holy Mother Church. If they are unafraid to practise their religion before the world, they will be honored by all right-thinking people and will do much towards making the Church respected even by her enemies.—St. Paul Bulletin.

## FRENCH ATHEIST'S REMARKABLE PLEA

NOVELIST AND POET URGES NATION TO TURN AGAIN TO THE FAITH OF ITS MOST GLORIOUS DAYS

A remarkable instance of the turning of an atheist toward God, under the stress of calamity, comes from France. The incident is reported in the Zurich News, is translated for the Presbyterian Witness, of Halifax, Nova Scotia:

"The celebrated French novelist and poet, Lavreanu, whose pen up to the present time has had for all faith in God, for every religious emotion, no matter of what creed, nothing but sarcastic mockery and scornful hates, now in an open confession urges his people to return to this faith as the only safe and secure foundation. And radical papers, even the most radical French papers, publish this avowal with respect. It is a document for the times, and reads as follows:

"I laughed at faith and held myself for a wise man. But there was no cheerfulness in my laughter when I saw France bleeding and weeping. I stood by the road and looked at the soldiers. They marched cheerfully onward to death. I asked, 'What makes you so calm?' And they began to pray: 'I believe in God.' I counted the sacrifices of our nation, and saw how the people prayed for strength to make them strong. I seemed to me, in my misery, that they knew of a heavenly fatherland shining with love, while earth burns in hate. But such knowledge is a science, a science of children. And I am no longer a child. This is what I lack, and the sense of loss chills me. That nation must despair which cannot believe that the pain of earth will be the joy of heaven. To hope when all fails: who can do this without faith? Is not our daily labor torment, is not all goodness an absurdity if a man does not believe?"

"I stand by the bloody streams of France. I see the holy water of her tears. I am in despair. \* \* \* How frightful and burning are the wounds of a people in which not a drop of the blood of that mystery flows, as a healing balm, that mystery, ah! I dare not blame Him. He was so good; and I. \* \* \* What is to become of France if her children do not believe, and if her men and women do not pray?"

"The past of France is great. It was a France that believed. The present of France is distress. A France that no longer believes feels it. Shall the future be better? It is in God's hand, only in God's hand. 'O! A nation of the dead covers the field. How hard it is, on this national cemetery, to be still on a hill! I cannot, I cannot. I have deceived myself, and you, too, who have read my books and sung my songs. It was a delusion, an intoxication, a confused dream. I see death, and I cry to life. The hands with weapons are busy with death; the folded hands hang lifeless. ' \* \* \* France, oh, France, turn again to the faith of your most glorious days. To forsake God is to be lost indeed. I know not whether I shall survive to-morrow. But I must say to my friends, Lavreanu dares not die as an atheist. It is not hell that dismay me, but the thought oppresses me: 'There is a God, and you stand so far from Him.' Rejoice, oh, my soul, that I am permitted to know this hour when I can kneel and say: 'I believe in God; yes, I believe.' This word is the morning song of humanity. Who so knows it not for him it is night.'—Philadelphia Standard and Times.

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## WINS HANDSOME REWARD FOR HER PATRIOTIC SACRIFICE

A short time ago it was reported that a Catholic servant girl in Cologne gave all her savings, amounting to more than 2,000 marks (\$500), to the war fund. The Empress thereupon presented the girl with a Catholic prayerbook with a dedication in her own handwriting. Since then she has received the following letter, which is published in the Taegische Rundschau:

"General Headquarters, November 8, 1914.

"His Majesty the Emperor and King heard with pleasure that you have generously put your savings at the disposal of the war fund of the city of Cologne. In recognition of this evidence of a sacrificing patriotic spirit His Majesty has been graciously pleased to present the en-

closed gold brooch to you. I put you in cognizance of this at His Majesty's order."—Church Progress.

What a life! says Cardinal Manning. We serve God by fits and starts; we have cold fits and hot fits like those that are struck with fever; sometimes we are in earnest, sometimes we give up; we are carried away by gusts of temptation; a frown of the world will kill off all our good resolutions. Such is our life—perpetually tossed to and fro like waves of the sea.

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