

can be made in an isolated community is necessary. Some degree of centralisation appears to be called for.

It is not for the outside observer to suggest a solution to these acute and—having in mind the beautiful simplicity of Catherine McAuley's aims—truly painful problems. But one may wonder whether an altogether new direction of activity might not be advisable, precisely in order to maintain that simplicity and to cope with the real misery of the present time. It was very late in life that the foundress began her great work and it would surely be in accordance with her spirit that—after a mere century of achievement—her daughters should find new ways of relieving our distress. Our wretchedness is not the result of economic anxiety or defective education, but of wilful estrangement from God in the midst of comfort:

Too great inheritance and too much ease
cheat mortal vision of immortal things.

Will not the simplicity and the poverty of the Sisters, coming with empty hands but merciful hearts, be the most certain way of succouring a weary and sated world, unaware of its own defects, undistressed by its crying need?



PALM SUNDAY

BY

JOHN TAULER

Intravit Jesus in Templum et eiciebat omnes ementes et vendentes.
And Jesus went into the Temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought. (Matt. 21, 12.)



WE read in today's Gospel that our Lord went into the temple and drove out of it the buyers and sellers, saying to those who sold doves: 'Take these things hence'. By that he meant that he wanted the temple to be pure: 'It is my temple', he seemed to say, 'I have full right to claim it. I alone intend to dwell there.

I alone mean to be its master.'

But, we may ask, of what temple is there question here? What is the temple of which God declares with such authority that he is the Master and where alone he means to be in command? This temple is the soul of each one of us, that soul which he has made to his own image and likeness as the Book of Genesis says: 'Let us make man to our image and likeness' (1, 26). And that is what he

did: he formed the reasonable soul so well to his own resemblance that there is nothing in heaven above, nothing, except the angels, that more perfectly resembles God than the reasonable soul. And therefore, why should it be surprising that he wants to keep this temple pure, that he will suffer no presence there but his own? This temple is infinitely pleasing to him because it is like himself; he is content to dwell there, and he desires to be alone there.

Now let us see who nowadays are the buyers and sellers that our Lord drives out of the temple. Here I ask my audience to pay attention. Leaving on one side those who deliberately commit grave sins and consciously remain in that state, I will speak at present only of virtuous people who, nevertheless, buy and sell. Our Lord expels them and drives them from the temple, and does not allow a single one to remain.

All these buyers then are those who avoid mortal sin, who even aspire to becoming better, who do good and useful things to the glory of God, such as fasts, vigils, prayers and other works of piety, but in all these things the motive that is guiding them is the hope of receiving from God something that will give them pleasure, that will be useful to them, that will flatter their self-love. In a word, they are entirely self-seeking. It is quite right then to call them merchants, since they give one thing in order to receive another; they bargain with our Lord, although they are deceiving themselves with their traffic. Indeed, all that they have, even their capacity for acting, comes to them certainly from God, and God is not obliged to do anything for them, to make them any return; everything depends upon his goodness, his gratuitous favours. Whatever they have they hold from God and not from themselves. God then owes them nothing in justice for the works and gifts that he receives from them. If he grants them anything, it is from pure benevolence that he does so, not at all because the gifts and deeds offered to him oblige him to do so, for all that they give is not their own property; all that they do does not come from themselves but from God, according to the words of Christ: 'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15).

It is therefore being very blind and very infatuated with self to wish to treat with the majesty of God. Also, because these people know nothing or little of truth, our Lord drives them from the temple. There is no union possible between light and darkness. And so when God, who is the essence of Light and Truth, enters into the temple of the soul, he drives out absolutely all ignorance and dispels all darkness so as to reveal himself in the fusion of light and truth. All dealers are dispersed the very instant that truth

penetrates the intelligence, for truth does no bargaining. Indeed, just as God in all his works seeks nothing for himself, but does all things from sheer liberality and pure love, so the man who carries God in the temple of his soul and who is united to him, should be free and disinterested in all his deeds, acting only out of love for the glory of God, without any self-seeking or regard for his own particular advantage, for it is God who accomplishes all that in him.

Now, I tell you for a certainty, as long as anyone is seeking his own interest in his actions, or looks for his own profit in all that God has given him, that man should be numbered among the merchants. On the contrary, if you wish to hold aloof from all traffic, whatever good you may do, do it solely for the honour and glory of God, reserving nothing for yourself any more than if you had accomplished nothing; still more, do not look for a reward. If you act thus, all that you do will be spiritual and God-like. This is the certain proof that all the unjust sellers have been driven out of the temple of your soul and that God alone abides there. And in this way you will be free from any mercenary spirit when, in all you do, you have no other intention and aim but the glory of God, setting aside absolutely all self-seeking.

But notice that the very text of our Gospel suggests to us an even higher step: this is the state of those who do their work with a pure intention and who, notwithstanding, do not attain true perfection because they are money changers (*nummularii*) and they still carry on commerce with creatures; in this they are like the changers in the temple and those sellers of doves whose chairs and tables our Lord overturned.

It is true that in principle the work of those sellers of doves and money changers had its use and was allowed: but as a consequence, what had been meant for the worship of God had degenerated into abuses of avarice and profit. This is what usually happens to those of whom we are speaking: doubtless they do everything with a pure intention, not seeking their own advantage in their deeds, yet in a certain way being attached to them, counting up the times and numbers, doing them with their minds full of images, and preoccupied with what went before and what is to follow. All this is sufficient to keep them from the supreme truth which they have so nearly touched. They should have kept their minds always free and detached from passing events whether happy or unhappy, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who was truly without any preoccupation, receiving at every instant, without interruption, a fresh influx of his heavenly Father and immediately, in the moment

of receiving it, he remitted it entirely to his Father and offered himself to him, returning to his divine Majesty with thanksgiving and love all that he had received from him. Whoever desires to attain and to feel within himself this supreme truth should imitate Christ in this. He must make every effort to live without dwelling on the past or the future, absolutely free and detached from all his own work and all forms and images that may present themselves; entirely in the present moment, receiving God's gifts and at once, without being detained by the slightest obstacle, referring them to God in the same light and pouring himself out to him with praises and thanksgivings in union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then indeed one would be disencumbered both from the sale of doves and from the profits of the money changers; that is to say, all the impediments would vanish; attachment to one's own works, otherwise excellent, but in which one had sought self, will no longer have any cause of existence. Is not this what our Lord meant to point out when, according to the Evangelist, he forbade them to bring these utensils into the temple? By it he meant to show us that the spiritual man should be free and detached from everything: the least obstacle could arrest his rapid progress forward.

However, as soon as the temple of the soul is thus emptied of every obstruction, that is to say, of all spirit of ownership and all ignorance, such a radiance comes to pass in him, so brilliantly does the light shine within him, that henceforward nothing created can make any impression on him—God alone, the Uncreated Being, dazzles him with his beauty.

Now nothing is so like this temple as God himself. Except the angels, nothing can be compared to it among creatures. The higher angels certainly much resemble it, but not in every point. For the very angels, in the faculties that make them like the soul, intelligence and love, have a limit that they cannot surpass: the soul on the contrary, as long as it remains in this mortal life, can always mount higher and higher. This is an indisputable fact. Suppose then that the soul of a man living in this world had attained to the degree of perfection which is proper to the highest of the angels, that angel would find itself outstripped by the soul who, with the help of God's grace and its free will, can make progress at every moment, and thus man can raise himself above all the angels, above every created intellect. Almighty God, being alone perfectly free and uncreated, is also alone perfectly like to the soul, not because he is uncreated, but because he is free. The soul, though, is created.

But when the soul reaches the pure and simple light of the

divinity, it feels so strongly the need of annihilating itself in its created being that it seems nothing can bring it back to life and give it back its strength: then God takes it upon himself by his uncreated essence, to sustain and preserve it. That soul would wish to obliterate itself entirely and disappear, but it is not able to do so. Yet it is true that before knowing God it has in a way entirely fled from itself. And it should be so. For, as I have said above, when Jesus enters into the temple of God he at once drives out by his divine power all the buyers and sellers. Then alone does he begin to speak in this temple.

You can rest assured that as long as another is allowed to speak in the temple of your soul Christ is silent. He does not feel at home. And in fact Christ is not at home in the soul as long as that soul admits strange guests with whom he does not wish to converse. If you want Christ to speak in your soul it must be solitary, and silence must reign there; then Christ can be heard. Make it lonely and silent, and Christ will enter there and he will speak. But, I ask you, what will he say? He is the Word of the eternal Father, and in this Word the Father expresses himself and all the divine nature and all the Godhead as he knows himself and completely understands himself. For if the power of God is perfect so also is his intelligence, and that is why he can perfectly utter himself. And so, as soon as he speaks his Word, he utters himself, he utters all; he begets from his own depths another Person, and to this Person he communicates his own nature.

In this Word are expressed all reasonable spirits, an imitation of the Word himself, according to the ideas that God has in his intelligence from all eternity. And these spirits emanate from God and shine exteriorly according to the idea of each that is in God. However, these spirits do not resemble the Word on every point, but they receive power to be able to acquire, grace, the likeness to this Word, I should say to acquire this Word himself as he is in himself. This is indeed what you find in St John: *Dedit eis potestatem filios dei fieri*. 'He gave them the power to be made the sons of God.' (John 1, 12.)

See all that the Father has expressed with his Word; see all that there is in this Word.

But, since the Father, as we have said, speaks all this to the soul, we might ask what Jesus himself has to say. Listen, my dear children.

As I have already told you, Christ in his way of speaking aims at revealing himself and all that the Father utters in him according to the soul's capacity.

First of all he reveals to the mind with immense and divine power the Majesty and sovereignty of his Father. When the human mind feels this divine power in the Son, it is itself made strong and powerful in all virtues; it feels capable of making progress in perfect purity; nothing can trouble it, neither happiness nor misfortune, nor any created thing. It remains firm and unshaken as if it had at its disposal the very strength of God against which everything else was shattered and seemed feeble and unimportant.

In the second place, Christ reveals himself with that ineffable wisdom which is himself. It is in this wisdom that the Father fully knows himself, in that wisdom that he understands his power and his divine majesty, finally his Word, that is to say, Wisdom itself and all that it contains, for all that is himself in essential unity.

When this wisdom unites itself to a soul, the soul immediately casts aside all doubt, all error; all darkness is dispelled, and the soul sees itself bathed in a pure light which is God himself, according to this word of the Prophet: *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.* 'In thy light we shall see light' (Ps. 35, 10). It is in thy light that we shall see the light, that is to say, 'We shall know, O Lord, the light by means of your light, we shall know God by means of God in the depths of our souls'. By this wisdom in fact united to the soul, the soul knows itself and all things. What am I saying? It knows Wisdom itself by means of Wisdom; it knows the Majesty of the Father, his sovereignty, his power, his fecundity and that essential immutability, and it knows all this in perfect unity and in a simplicity that is devoid of all division.

In the third place, Christ reveals himself with inexpressible love which emanates and overflows with abundance and sweetness from the very strength of the Holy Spirit, and which flows out with all its exuberant goodness into all hearts capable of receiving it. Not only does Christ manifest himself with this sweetness, but he invites himself to the soul. And then the soul itself, transported by this delight is raised above itself and all things, to flow back by grace and without intermediary up to God, its origin and source. When this union has taken place, the exterior man is henceforth submissive to the interior man, and obeys promptly even unto death.

May almighty God deign to make us apt to receive him so that, coming into us after having driven away all the obstacles of soul or body, we may be made one with him henceforward on this earth, and eternally in heaven after this short and miserable life. Amen.