

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

BACKBITING.

"And he spoke rightly." (St. Mark vii. 35)

The Gospel tells us, dear brethren, that no sooner had our Lord touched the tongue of the dumb man than he began to speak rightly.

How often he has touched our tongues by coming to us in Communion, and yet how far we are from speaking rightly! It may be that we need healing more than the man of whom the Gospel tells. He had not the use of his tongue, and consequently could not employ it in the service of sin; we are blessed with its use, and yet, perhaps, we do not sufficiently realize that God wants us always to speak rightly.

The tongue wrongly used is capable of effecting a great deal of evil. St. James calls an evil tongue a "world of iniquity." Calumny, slander, and backbiting are but a few of the many sins of which it is the cause. Where, indeed, come so many disputes, quarrels, and as a consequence so much animosity between those who were formerly, or who ought to be, on terms of intimacy? Ask your own experience if charity was ever wounded while you guarded against idle conversation, vain disputes, and unkind remarks. You may be certain that if the tongue be carefully watched over sins against charity will be fewer.

I am far from thinking that such faults are to be found only or indeed generally among habitual or hardened sinners. Some persons who consider themselves very pious and nearly perfect, who find it hard to collect sufficient matter for confession, do not always shun uncharitable conversations. Let them remember what St. James says: "He who offends not with his tongue is a perfect man." No piety is solid and genuine unless it be founded upon charity, which is the queen of virtues. We deceive ourselves in supposing that we are perfect, or even really pious, if we continue to gossip about our neighbor.

Sins of the tongue are often most grievous, and are often likewise irreparable in their consequences. Let us dwell upon a few such sins as offend God by reason of the injury which they do to our brother who is made according to His image. To speak badly of a person against whom we entertain an unkind feeling may seem to some people trifling or at most only venial. This is a great mistake if what we say does notable harm to him. It is no less grievous to injure our neighbor in his good name than in his property. To restore his goods is not very difficult if we still possess them or have the means of procuring others of the same value. But when there is question of repairing the injury which we have done by speaking falsely about him, then the task assumes a much greater difficulty. It is about as possible to stay the progress of a forest-fire as to prevent this fire of an evil tongue from spreading in all directions. Nevertheless, we are bound to make every effort in our power to repair the injury. We need not hope that God will pardon us unless we are so disposed.

But some one will say: "I do not belong to the class that you have now described. I never say anything that is untrue of my neighbor, but simply mention to others those faults of which he is guilty." To this I answer: "If you do so in a grave matter, without necessity, and to those who are not concerned about the welfare of the person in question, you are guilty of the sin of slander. By whom have you been authorized to make known his failings? Are you perfect in virtue? Would it please you if some one were to make your faults public? Do not then treat others in this way, since you are unwilling to suffer it yourself."

If you have been thoughtless in the past, let the future find you more guarded. Cultivate a kind, charitable disposition towards all, even those who offend you. Weigh your words with care, think of your own sins, avoid idle conversations and gossip.

THE BISHOP OF ANTIGONISH ON TEMPERANCE.

CIRCULAR LETTER ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT.

To the Reverend clergy of the Diocese of Antigonish:

Dear Reverend Fathers—Not without acute pain do I learn that the evil of intemperance is on the increase in several localities within this diocese. This is a calamity for which you and all interested in the salvation of souls are bound to provide every possible remedy. It is a most melancholy fact that deep-rooted prejudices prevail among many concerning this degrading vice. Other sins find no sentimental excuse in public opinion, but that of intemperance is an exception. Those who engage in the ruinous traffic of intoxicating drink meet with widespread sympathy, and in favor of their besotted victims and their excesses silly excuses put forward that would lead us to suspect that, in the opinion of many, drunkenness is no sin at all, but rather an excusable weakness. In vain does the inspired Apostle classify drunkards with fornicators, adulterers, idolaters and thieves, and declare that they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 10); these perverse gospellers of intemperance and intoxication shut their eyes to the truth and persist in finding fault with those who loudly denounce and spare not a traffic so fraught with mischief to souls, to health, to substance, to family and to society in general.

After a careful investigation extending over several years, many of the most renowned specialists of the age have come to the conclusion that alcohol, while it does warm the surface of the body, does not increase its heat, but diminishes it, does not give tone to the muscles but relaxes them, and reduces their power, introduces into the human system a distinct element of excitement followed by muscular depression—the forerunner of the complete paralysis of the whole frame is neither a food nor a strength-giver, but practically a health-destroyer, and rank poison as a beverage. Again, experience proves that there is something so peculiarly deceitful and ensnaring connected with the use of alcoholic

liquor in this age and country that the crime, misery and wretchedness arising from the existing abuse of it, immensely exceed the whole amount of good derivable from the right use of it. This is a most important truth never to be lost sight of. It shows us that it would be a most dangerous fallacy to contend that, in this matter as in others, alcoholic drink is entitled to the benefit of the adage which says that "The abuse of a thing good in itself does not afford a valid argument against the right use of it." It proves almost conclusively that the use of intoxicants is extremely dangerous, and we are assured by Holy Writ that he that loveth danger shall perish in it, and that "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last." (Eccl. iii. 27.) The man who, in the face of indisputable facts, ignores that drunkenness is an enormous sin against nature, a hydra-headed sin against the family, against morals, religion, society and God, the prolific source of so many other sins we deplore, the begetter of temporal miseries, and the bar to their social amelioration, is assuredly a man whose "heart" is indeed "hard" or insensible to the teaching of wisdom and impervious to the voice of the God of truth as well as the letters of experience. And yet what more common than to hear professed Christians openly and persistently sympathizing with those who are illegally engaged in the liquor traffic, emphatically censuring its opponents, and palliating, when not excusing or defending, the excesses of its besotted victims? Latitudinarian views resulting from inveterate habit or deep-rooted prejudice seem to blind many people and make them leaders of the blind. A law framed in accordance with enlightened principles and pure morality may commend itself to the reason of intelligent individuals and may be executed with all possible wisdom; no matter, if it runs counter to the popular feeling fomented by these self-same mischievous makers, it can never inspire the needed disgust of the prohibited action, nor bring about the permanent moral improvement which it is the legislator's object to secure. Let these voluntary advocates of the devil reflect on the tremendous evil they are guilty of in pandering to the unhallowed leanings of mortals in a matter so vital to the temporal and eternal welfare of man.

Let it next be remembered that many practically cannot partly because of existing temptation arising out of the force of pernicious example, partly from want of the self-restraint proceeding from moral and religious culture, be temperate in the use of alcoholic drink; and that the reformation of the intemperate cannot be brought about by any means short of total abstinence from spirituous liquors. Further, with the strong encouragement which in various ways is given to the abuse of alcoholic drink, nothing short of total abstinence will prevent the continuance, in the rising generation, of the terrible evils which we have at present to deplore. Lastly, experience has also shown that this reformation cannot, morally speaking, be duly attained without the co-operation and example of the sober classes. In no case the superiority of example over mere exhortation or precept is more obvious than in this. The phrase, I practice teetotalism myself," is found to be worth any amount of preaching to the most eloquent; and the lamentable failure of so many advocates, who are not in a position to use this argument, ought to lead all of you dear Rev. Fathers, to a most serious consideration of the claims which your duty to your flock and to society should set up in this connection in opposition to your individual feelings, taste and comfort. Had the immortal Father Matthew never pronounced or acted upon his famous "Here goes in the name of God"—as he proceeded to take the pledge—never could he have achieved one hundredth part of the marvels that crowned his apostolate, and his centennial this year would have passed without evoking any of the extraordinary enthusiasm which has greeted it on both sides of the Atlantic.

But we have a higher and holier tribunal than that of reason, human policy or patriotism to appeal to: we have Christian self-denial and charity which we should reflect in all our thoughts, words and works. Animated by the Spirit of our dear Lord and Master, we are bound, like St. Paul to account even one single soul to be so precious that we will on no consideration allow ourselves any indulgence whatever tending to endanger it. According to the great apostle, there are certain things indifferent or innocent in themselves which we ought to shun if we believe or suspect that to act contrarily would lead the weak or wavering into sin. Assuredly in his day there was no intrinsic harm in eating meat sacrificed to idols, for, said he, "we know that an idol is nothing in the world," that it has no quality entitling it to fear or esteem, that it is an empty representation and nothing more. Still, remark what he adds: "But take heed lest perhaps your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if a man see him that hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols? and through thy knowledge shall the weak one perish for whom Christ died? Now when ye sin thus against the brethren and wound their weak conscience ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat scandalize my brother, I will eat no flesh for ever more lest I scandalize my brother." (1 Cor. viii. 9, 13.) Elsewhere he also writes: "Be aware of destroying the work of God for meat's sake. All things indeed are clean; but it is evil for the man who eateth with offence" (giving occasion to the spiritual ruin of his weak brother or acting against his own conscience). It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby the weak brother is offended or scandalized, or weakened in faith. (Rom. xiv. 20, 21.) Thus, wherever the action, although in itself lawful, is likely to expose our weak brother to spiritual ruin it should be omitted through charity, especially when no urgent cause exists for its performance. This language so redolent of the spirit of God, contains a lesson

of the profoundest wisdom and of the highest importance. One sovereign principle pervades it throughout, namely, that an action, indifferent or innocent in itself, may become a deadly sin, a crime against Christ whenever it produces scandal or spiritual ruin to souls redeemed by Christ. This principle He applies to a certain class of Christians, who, more enlightened, stable and influential than their weaker brethren, presumed to do things that led the latter into grievous sin; and he sketches in terrible language the nature of such crime by calling it the destruction of the work of God, as sin against Christ, and consequently entailing eternal damnation on its authors.

Who does not see the close analogy between the use and the abuse of meats, sacrificed to idols, on the one hand, and the use and abuse of intoxicants on the other? Both those meats and those drinks are good in themselves and can be used by the enlightened and the strong without detriment to their souls; while to the weak or unenlightened they are a source of spiritual death. Now, the Holy Ghost assures us that "God gave commandment to every man concerning his neighbor" to promote his spiritual advantage; hence St. Paul points out to the strong and enlightened Christians of his day their paramount duty of setting a good example to their weaker brethren by a total abstinence from all meats immolated to idols lest the weak brethren should be scandalized; and were he now to appear in our midst, would he not by a parity of reasoning vehemently urge upon such of us as are strong in the matter of sobriety to watch over the weak to set them a salutary example by entirely abstaining from all intoxicating liquors, because experience has long since proved that the influence of the sober can be effectually exerted only by an example practically embodying the principle of teetotalism?

Seeing, therefore, that teetotalism conduces so powerfully to the preservation of health, that the combined voices of reason and experience proclaim it to be a most potent factor in the work of social amelioration, that revealed religion soaring above the passions and prejudices of fallen humanity and shaping her divine lessons to the self-denying spirit of a crucified God, not only pronounces it to be his will, but also, under circumstances which we see most widely to obtain in our day and generation, a necessary preservative against a scandal that deals damnation to those "for whom Christ died," our interest as individuals, as members of the great Christian family, and as disciples of Jesus Christ loudly calls upon us to enroll ourselves under the banner of the total abstinence pledge, and by a united effort to hush each and every device of its enemies. By taking and keeping this pledge you will set the needed example of sobriety to each other and to your flocks, encourage the faltering, incite the faint-hearted and despondent to tread bravely in your footsteps, inspire the poor victims of intemperance with burning shame, sorrow, and detestation of the wretched life they lead, and rouse them to lofty aspirations and valiant efforts to which they would remain utter strangers without the inspiration of your blessed example. And thus instead of inflicting death on redeemed souls, you will save them from the eternal banishment of your conspicuous sobriety, and have the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing those confided to your charge become models of virtue diffusing all around the life-giving odor of Jesus Christ; and when death shall put a period to your earthly career, your benefactions, like those of Father Mathew, shall live and work after you, your bodies will be accompanied to their last resting-place here below amidst the benediction of those who will have survived you, while your souls, like that of St. Francis Xavier—himself a teetotal abstainer—will have the crowning joy of being welcomed into unbounded bliss by those whose souls you will have been instrumental in saving.

To attain the happy consummation, you are hereby requested to combine, to declare relentless war against the traffic and the use of intoxicants, and to insist prudently on every member of your respective flocks becoming, as soon as possible, enrolled under the blessed banner of the League of the Cross, and participating in the Holy Indulgence which the Vicar of Christ has put at the disposal of all who join it, and observe its rules as far as practicable. In the name of God, then, let the campaign be at once opened in downright earnest and let it never be closed until "your adversary the devil" shall have finally ceased his rounds "as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pt. v. 8), and the last of the predestined souls shall have left earth and gone to its eternal reward. Isolated efforts, however strenuous and enduring, will not do. Hence, dear Rev. Fathers, every one of you, who has charge of souls is expected to do his duty in this crusade against the demon of intemperance. There must be no neutral, no laggard among you. Know, as I do, and thankful to God, as I am, for the lively faith of the most of your parishioners, and their admirable unselfishness and self-sacrificing spirit whenever the glory of God and the good of souls are clearly concerned, as in the present instance, I feel confident that they will fully respond to the earnest pleadings of your zeal, and that each of them will not only take the pledge, but keep it faithfully as long as he or she may please, in other words until he or she will have formally asked the parish priest to erase his or her name from the official list of teetotals. This making of the duration of the pledge optional, will make the situation clearly inexcusable. Independently of this, let no man, not even the weakest, fear or despond at the thought of his frailty. Let him bear in mind that his "insufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5), who had solemnly pledged His Word that "Every one who asketh, receiveth; and he who seeketh, findeth; and to him who knocketh, it shall be opened." (Matth. vii. 8.) The weakest and the most sorely tempted has thus the omnipotence of prayer at his disposal. God is with him to prevent his fall, and he can confidently cry with St. Paul: "If God is for us who is against us?" (Rom. viii. 31.)

Be pleased to impart, in season and out of season, the substance of all the foregoing principles to your respective flocks, and believe me dear Reverend Fathers, most faithfully,
JOHN CAMERON,
Bishop of Antigonish.

"PAT."

MR. ONAHAN ELOQUENTLY REBUKES SNEERERS AND SHOWS THEIR POOLISHNESS.

In his address at the recent jubilee celebration of old St. Mary's, Chicago, Holy W. L. Onahan took occasion to notice the old-time sneering references to the Irish and Catholics. Here is what he said:

It used to be said, too often with a sneer, "the Irish, ah yes, the Irish; they build our canals and railroads!" Yes, and the descendants of these same Catholic Irishmen are now the chief engineers of the canals and are managing the railroads their father's built! The most important railroads in this country, and I may add in Canada, are managed by men of Irish descent; and some of the greatest engineering undertakings in the United States and in Panama are headed by Irishmen—as I could easily demonstrate by names did time permit. And so it is likewise in every profession and department of human activity. In law, in the highest ranks of the judiciary, in the profession of journalism, in medicine and surgery Irishmen and Catholics are everywhere in the front ranks; and in the public life of our city I need only turn to the honorable exiles surrounding me on this platform. The times have gone by when Irishmen and Catholics can be sneered at as "foreigners" and "Romanists." Happily that narrow and mischievous spirit of intolerance is fast disappearing. But for the foreigners, where would this country be to-day? These foreigners have peopled and developed the great West, and have everywhere contributed to the progress and material welfare of the United States. And in saying this I mean, of course, to include all European immigrants, whether Catholic or Protestant.

It is not from the ranks of the Catholic body, whether foreign or native born, that the disturbing forces of anarchy and destructive socialism are recruited. The Catholic Church here as elsewhere, teaches respect for authority and obedience to law.

That Church, and that Church alone, stands inflexibly for the sanctity and inviolability of the marriage tie, and consistently and persistently denounces the infamy of our abominable divorce system.

The Catholic Church stands for the home and family life, for the religious and moral training of youth, and for the security of personal and property rights and interests.

It champions the cause of the poor against the injustice and exactions of capital; and while insisting on the obligations that wealth imposes, it at the same time warns against the dreams of the socialistic propaganda. Thoughtful and conservative non-Catholics everywhere begin to see and to acknowledge that the Catholic Church is now the most powerful conservative influence in this country through its principles and its teaching.


I could multiply notable examples and citations in proof to demonstrate my assertion, but the limit set for this address will not admit of my doing so.

I have referred to what this country owes to the foreign immigration. Let it not be forgotten that to the exile from Europe the United States has been as the "Promised Land."

This country has given generous welcome to all comers and has opened wide the gates of opportunity to the immigrant who sought the privileges of this free and hospitable land. This generosity must not be abused.

Loyalty and devotion to this republic is an essential and obligatory duty for all, and especially on the part of those who have come from other lands to enjoy its privileges, to share in its protection and to avail themselves of its opportunities.

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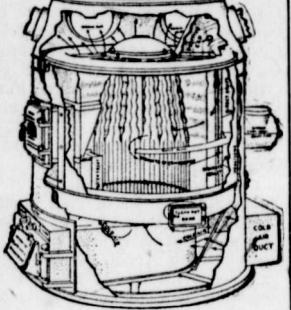
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Mortality and Religion.

A minister the other day, in a letter to a New York daily, opposed all religion in the schools and insisted that every vestige of it be excluded from the school-room—Bible, prayers, hymns and decorations. Such a stand naturally pleased all the people who insist upon the absolute secularization of education. But, says the Catholic News, so good an American as George Washington was not of their way of thinking, as may be seen from the following quotation from his farewell address:

"Promote as an object of primary importance institutions for the diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened. . . . Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. . . . Do not indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religion."

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