

Trinity Sunday. June 1, 1890.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. HOLY SEASONS.

The last command spoke of giving God's *Name* reverence, the fourth speaks of His *Day*. It speaks of the dedication of our *time* to God.

Distinguish *Holiday* and *Holy-day*. The former means *no work*, a day of rest and enjoyment; the latter a *sacred day*, one that belongs to God. Easter-day, Christmas-day, Ascension-day, Good Friday, are all *Holy-days*. The first of these two words tells us *what we are not to do*: the second, *what we are to do*.

I. HOLIDAY.

A day of rest; this is what Sunday is to us. The Jews called the day of rest the *Sabbath*. Two reasons why they kept the day of rest: (a) God rested after creation on the seventh day (Gen. ii. 1); (b) Because they came out of the land of Egypt on the seventh day. Christians keep the first day of the week instead of the seventh day, because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day (S. Matt. xxviii. 1, 2). Early Christians kept holy the first day (Acts xx. 7; Rev. i. 10). The change of day does not matter; the spirit of the command is that we give one day out of seven to God. The Church has, under the authority of the Apostles, perhaps under the direction of our Lord Himself, appointed the first day.

II. HOLY-DAY.

What *are* we to do on Sunday? To worship God. The only act of public worship instituted by our Lord Himself is "The Holy Communion." Matins and Evensong are services appointed by the Church. It is quite right and proper that we should attend them *if we can*, but the one act of worship *obligatory upon all* is "the Holy Communion." The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb. x. 25). The only purpose for which the early Christians assembled in public worship was "the breaking of bread," the Holy Communion. Acts xx. 7, points out that the purpose for which they met on the first day of the week was "to break bread." We must worship God, and in *His* way. God will honour those who honour His holy day (Isa. lviii. 13, 14). If not able to worship him in public with our brethren, we must worship him in the same service, as far as possible, as they are offering in Church, and thus join them in spirit. Works of necessity or charity may be performed on the Lord's (or first) Day (S. Luke xiii. 10-17).

III. THE CATECHISM explains this commandment in these words: "To serve Him truly all the days of my life." Thus, while one day in seven is set apart especially for God, the commandment teaches us that all my time must be consecrated to Him, my daily work performed to His glory (1 Cor. x. 31). It is not serving God truly if Sunday be spent in idleness and slothfulness.

"A Sunday well spent
Brings a week of content,
And health for the toils of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whate'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

Family Reading.

Devotional Notes on the Sermon on the Mount.

19—THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

S. Matt. v. 27-30: "Ye have heard that it was said, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell."

These words are followed by some teachings on the subject of divorce, which cannot properly be considered in this series of papers. We by no means ignore the social importance of that question, or the difficulties connected with existing practice in this and other countries; but it cannot be properly discussed here. The reader may be referred to some valuable remarks on the subject

in Dollinger's "Christianity and the Church in the first Age."

In teaching the spirituality of the law, our Lord could not pass over the seventh commandment. Every one would confess the heinousness of the sin of taking another man's wife. But it would appear that the teachers of that period did not fully recognize the wider extension given to the prohibition by the express words of the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbour's wife." And our Lord here points out that this commandment is violated not merely by the overt act, but by the cherishing or allowing of unlawful desire.

Archbishop Trench remarks: "Here Augustine makes an accurate and important distinction; namely, that it is not the looking at a woman, out of which, unawares to the beholder, there rises up in his heart the suggestion of an unholy desire, which constitutes a man guilty of adultery; but the looking *with the intention and purpose* of thereby feeding desire; though, indeed, it is only a practical Pelagianism, which would deny that concupiscence itself, whether stirred by a distinct act of the will or not, has the nature of sin. Still it is not this which Christ is here denouncing, but rather the deliberate fomenting and feeding of lust through the feeding of impure looks." Luther makes the same kind of distinction when he quotes one of the old fathers as saying that, although we cannot prevent a bird from flying over our head, we can easily enough prevent it from building its nest in our hair, or biting off our nose. The principle, that sin does not consist in the mere act, has been recognized by all the more spiritual teachers of morality. Thus Seneca says that a man is a thief before he is stained his hands with the plunder.

And yet here, again, there is need of caution. Sin does not consist in the mere action, but in the motive; and yet we must not say that there is no difference between the intention to sin and the sin brought to completion. Such an assertion has been made; and it has led to great evils. Men have been tempted to say that they may as well sin as think of sinning, and this is a dangerous error. There is a possibility of reconsideration whilst the act is still in suspense. It may never take effect; and, although the purpose of evil has left a stain on the soul, the stain would have been deeper if the thought had become a deed.

After thus requiring a spiritual obedience, and not a mere external or literal conformity with the legal requirement, our Lord seems to recognize the self-denial involved in such obedience. It may be like the cutting off of the right hand or the plucking out of the right eye; but even if this price has to be paid, it is not too high. A right eye that would destroy our soul would be a possession too costly for us to possess. The expressions employed are very significant. It is the eye, one of the noblest organs of the body, that by means of which we are brought into connexion with the outer world. It is the hand which is the instrument of action. And it is the right hand and the right eye, the more dignified member of each pair.

We do not suppose that our Lord would have wished us to shrink from literal obedience to this command, if the case had really arisen in which such a sacrifice would avert the evil to which a man might be exposed. But this is not the thought which our Lord intended to leave in our minds, but this, that the way of spiritual service was the way of self-denial; that, if we would come after Him, we must take up our own cross and follow Him. The sacrifice may often have to be bitter; but it will never be worth our while to shrink from it, and lose the blessing which can be gained only by making the sacrifice. It will not profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; and the whole world is more than his noblest organ, more than the right hand or the right eye.

—Some men, like a hornet, are always found stinging uppermost. They sting their friends to show their independence; their enemies, to show their impartiality; and each other, to keep themselves in practice.

Ascension Day.

Awake, awake; O Zion's daughters sing;
Bring forth thy sweetest praise, and worship Him,
For He is now gone up to dwell on high,
And reign triumphant in the lofty sky.

For us He died, that we in Him might live;
He conquered death, eternal life to give;
And though ascended high to heaven above,
He still remembers sinners in His love.

O Saviour, give us faith to trust in Thee;
That in Thy beauty we may ever see
Attractions higher than on earth are given,
Which lift our thoughts to where Thou art in heaven

—Rev. L. Sinclair, Incumbent of Christ Church, Ilfracombe, Ontario, Ascension Day, 1890.

What one Woman has Done.

Of Miss Arnott, of Edinburgh, and her important work in Palestine, the Rev. Dr. Mutchmore, of Philadelphia, who has been travelling in the East, writes: "Miss Arnott went to visit the East and was induced, temporarily, to take the place of an absent teacher. The condition of the people and their extreme wretchedness awoke her pity, and she conceived the idea of applying moral leverage where all true elevation begins, at the individual, and so elevating the home. She began alone, drawing on her own resources, obtained ground on moderate terms, and began a school. She taught such poor girls as she could persuade to come. Her curriculum was very simple; its two great lessons were how to live and how to die. God stood by her, and soon she had a building and as many scholars as she could care for.

"Her work (by some) was looked upon as visionary, until its manifest success brought offers of abundant help and even management. One of the finest school properties now in the Levant—worth, probably, \$75,000—is a part of the result of her work of faith and love, and all the outcome of her own indomitable spirit, for she had very little to begin with. Twenty-five years she has been in the field, during which time she has had wonderful tokens of the divine favor in guidance, help and results."

Sleeplessness.

A Swedish servant-maid, finding that her mistress was troubled with sleepless, told her of a practice of the people of her country who are similarly afflicted. It was to take a napkin, dip it in ice-cold water, wring it slightly and lay it across her eyes. The plan was followed and it worked like a charm. The first night the lady slept four hours without awaking,—something she had not done for several months. At the end of that time the napkin had become dry. By wetting it again she at once went to sleep, and it required considerable force to arouse her in the morning.

It's Mother is in the Baggage Car.

It was on a Pennsylvania railroad train coming north from Washington. All the passengers on the sleeper had dozed off. The exceptions were a young man and a baby. The former was willing to follow the example of the majority, but the latter objected in a loud voice. Its cries awoke the other passengers, and some pretty strong language was heard. The young man got out of his berth and carried the baby up and down the car, trying to soothe it. But the baby was ailing and fretful, and its voice would not be still. Finally a gray-headed man, who was evidently an old traveller, stuck his head out from behind the curtains and called to the young man in a rather sharp voice:

"See here, sir, why don't you take that child to its mother. She will be able to manage it much better than you. It evidently wants its mother."

"Yes, that's it," echoed half a dozen other irritated passengers.

The young man continued to pace up and down for a moment, then said, in a quiet strained voice:

"Its mother is in the baggage car."

There was an instantaneous hush for a moment. Presently the gray-headed man stuck his head out in the aisle again.

"Let me take it for a while," he said softly; "perhaps I can quiet it."