

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CONSISTENCY OF FAITH

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. iv. 5.)

The inconsistencies of man can not be numbered. Sometimes we are inclined to think that our courage is deplorable, since our inconsistencies are so many. They would be less, no doubt, if our courage were always displayed. It is not always a lack of courage that often causes us to be so inconsistent; in many instances it must be attributed to our ignorance. We may not admit that we are ignorant, and usually we are slow to acknowledge our lack of courage; but this does not alter the fact. These two failings are what make us act so often as if we were bereft of reason.

We do not manifest our inconsistencies so openly regarding material things as we do with reference to things spiritual. The very material things before our gaze give us an experimental knowledge that we seldom, if ever, deny. It is not so with regard to spiritual things. These we can not experience; we must believe them on the authority of another. But neither can we, absolutely speaking, experience all material facts. There are thousands of these that we believe on authority. Who will question the incontestable facts written on the pages of history as having happened hundreds or thousands of years ago? Yet those who believe in the reliability of history never experienced the facts which it records. These things happened years before they were born. It is true that we, perhaps, see similar things happening around us; and by comparison we can judge those mentioned by history to have been possible. However, we do not, as a rule, stop to consider this, but we give our assent readily, almost blindly, to one whom we recognize as an authority.

For the sake of the comparison we wish to make, we intend to speak principally of experimental knowledge. And it is not so much of the knowledge itself that we wish to speak, but of our attitude in the face of it; of the way, in other words, in which we accept it.

We do not like to have violence done to us, as it is contrary to our nature. Now, this repugnance toward violence exists in our senses and in our mind. We naturally recoil at it; our senses resent it almost automatically. In our everyday life we meet with it often. Sometimes we almost fail to recognize it until we experience it. However, this violence is not always the result of intent. What we consider violence is often done to us by irresponsible agents. Who does not know, for instance, of the violence of a stormy sea? Who has not heard of the force of a cloudburst, or of a thunderstorm? Do we not consider the earth violent also, when it trembles and lays cities waste?

The point we wish to clarify is this: We do not consider the sea evil, nor the skies, nor the earth, even though, now and then, they do work havoc among us. We would rather that they exist than that they should not. Why? Because the blessings they afford us are practically invaluable to our lives. What would we be without the fruits of the earth, without the canopy sky above us, without the mighty expanses of water between us and other continents? We are willing to suffer their occasional violence in order to enjoy their continual blessings.

Now let us turn to the Almighty: Unfortunately there are many who think that God does them violence—not physical violence, it is true, but intellectual violence. They say that God wishes to force them to believe truths that they can not understand, and that they consider violence to their intelligence. Let us ask this class of people: Even if God did demand of you a sacrifice of your intelligence on some occasions, why should you complain? Are you blinded to the vast number of blessings He gives you? Can they, even for a moment, be compared in number with the few so-called acts of intellectual violence He inflicts upon you? Certainly God's favors to man are innumerable, and His blessings of inestimable worth. Man does not even know the number of times God is blessing him. He can not exist without God's help. Man will not regret his material blessings, though the sources of these often inflict violence upon him. Why, then, does he not act consistently, and consider God in this light?

But, as a matter of fact, does God really ask us to do violence to our intelligence in assenting to His truths? He certainly does not. If we think He does, we are culpably ignorant and full of pride. God is infinite in every respect. We are but finite. Can not truths, then, far above our grasp, exist? And can not God ask us, on His authority, to admit them? Nor does He demand of us that we do this without a recompense. That faith we need in admitting them, to which is conjoined good works, will win for us peace in the present world and eternal glory in the next.

How frequently we hear people say that man may believe as he pleases. If this be so, he can believe only what he experiences, thus limiting his faith to belief in

natural facts. Then, too, according to this theory, he need not believe anything that he himself has not really experienced, even though it actually happened. As St. Paul says, we must believe in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," on our faith. If there is unity in God, unity in faith, and unity in baptism, how can man have multiplicity of belief regarding any or all of them? The truth remains always the truth, no matter what man says or believes. Fire burns. If a man, lunatic or not, denies that it burns, will his assertion deprive the fire of its power to burn? Will the modern or post-Reformation man change the nature of God, or of any of His attributes or commands, because he doesn't believe in them as the Church, commissioned by God, tells all to believe in them?

It may be tolerant to believe as you like and to allow your neighbor the same liberty, but it is a virtue that is not religious. Nay, in one who possesses the true faith, it ceases to be a virtue in any respect. True, man must be tolerant and we exhort him to be tolerant; but with tolerance he must have hope for the conversion of the erring one. Indiscriminate tolerance must not be encouraged in an individual. It must be fought, but with only one weapon—charity. It is a spiritual work of mercy to instruct the ignorant, and today the tolerant are but the ignorant; many, perhaps most of them, invincibly ignorant.

KEEP STONG AND HEALTHY

It is impossible to feel active and energetic when the bowels are clogged from undigested food.

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THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Hideous and complex evils have desolated the earth since the days of Creation. If we were to count them all up, to multiply the number of wars, famines, deluges, earthquakes, and so on, we would be appalled beyond measure by the immensity of it all.

Countless millions have lived and died before we were ever thought of save in the Mind of God. Some of them are known to us through the pages of history. Many of them were good and virtuous, others were vicious and bad. Some brought goodness wherever they went and made the world better because of their living in it; others created trouble and disorder and left only misery in their wake.

Bereavements of families, breaking up of homes, the laying waste of fertile lands and crops, the toppling over of once fair cities, riots and strikes, fires and other mischiefs have proved the insecurity and instability of man's life here below.

It is easy for the Catholic to put his finger on the cause of all this misery. It is represented by one small word: sin. Eliminate this little word from the vocabulary, strike it from the earth, and no real calamity or disorder is possible. Unfortunately we are powerless to blot it out, but it exists, a strong impregnable power where it holds sway, laying waste all before it.

The best and noblest work ever conceived has fallen before one poisonous breath of sin. We might go on and on, summing up the case against sin, and never quite realize the enormity and immensity of it. Men, are groaning beneath its terrible weight, for the smallest sin ever committed is heavier on a human soul than all the burdens of the world combined.

To the eye of faith, things are clearly apparent which cannot be seen with the eye distorted by passion. When Augustine fell sick at Rome with a dangerous fever, the sad state of his soul was even more apparent to his holy mother than was the condition of his diseased body. But even to the sinner, ignorant at that time of God's holy laws, it was apparent that his principal misery lay interiorly and not exteriorly.

Listen to his words: "And behold, I was presently struck with the scourge of corporal sickness, and was going down to hell, carrying with me all the evils I had committed against Thee, against myself or against my neighbors, many and grievous besides the band of original sin by which we shall all die in Adam."

The effects of sin are startlingly revealed when some frightful cata-

strophism, as the Flood occurs in the history of the world. But in reality, we have only to look about us, and even within us, clearly to discern the effects of that monstrous act of ingratitude toward the Creator which estranges Him from the child fashioned by His hand, and incurs the heavy penalty of His displeasure.

Sin—it is the reason for many petty as well as great miseries of life. Its ravages are far greater than those made by public calamities which plunge whole cities into the bosom of the earth, and cause the loss of millions of dollars worth of property, not to speak of the frightful holocaust of lives.

Whose sin? "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone," said the Saviour to the hypocrites who were about to put to death the unfortunate victim of human weakness. We are all children of Adam, and as such have a share in the great universal debt which we owe to God.

Where to begin to stamp out this fearful pestilence, ever so much more insidious than any virulent fever which attacks a community and strikes terror into the hearts of countless individuals?

With ourselves. It is the only way. If we wait for our neighbor to rectify his mistakes, he will probably wait for us to do the same before he enters upon this all-important campaign for holiness.

"I will be more patient, more kind, more modest . . . one" can choose the virtue most useful for him. Choose it, and then, with God's help enter in earnest upon that all-important task—the preparing of the field for the coming of the great Reaper, Death. For we would wish, when he comes, that he should not find weeds and stubble and brambles, not dry and barren ground, but a fertile and well-cultivated soil, from which spring forth virile and sturdy virtues, even as the crops which are the ornament to the successful farmer in harvesting time.—The Pilot.

CHEERLESS GOSPEL OF MODERN SCIENCE

In marked contrast with the glad tidings of Christianity that elevated the mind and brought joy to the heart, the cheerless gospel of modern science has a most depressing and discouraging effect. Scientists of today seem to take a fiendish delight in belittling man and robbing him of his unique dignity that lifts him above the entire animal creation. In unholy rivalry they vie with one another in making him feel that he really means nothing in the cosmic scheme of things, that his origin is low and his destiny mean, that he is but the toy of blind mechanical forces and that eventually every trace of him shall be blotted out. Gloom and dark pessimism are the fruits of such teaching. From a gospel so utterly cheerless man can draw no inspiration. In it he finds no motives for high endeavor and dedication to exalted ideals. It has a paralyzing influence and crushes every noble impulse in the heart of man.

The practical consequences of a doctrine of this kind are most disastrous. A lowering of moral standards is inevitable. If you tell man that his nature does not transcend the level of the brute he will be satisfied to live on the level of the brute. The idea which man entertains with regard to his being will necessarily be reflected in his conduct. If it is a mean idea his conduct will sink to a low plane; if it is a high idea his conduct will rise to serene heights. When men think meanly of themselves, they are apt to act meanly; when men regard themselves as animals and nothing more, they are apt to behave as such. If they become accustomed to look upon themselves as the cousins of the beasts of the jungles they will be quick to adopt the morality of the situation. Ideas work themselves out in life. Evil teaching bears evil fruits. Man cannot stand inconsistency between his ideas and his actions. His logical instinct will compel him to adjust his life to his beliefs.

It is quite evident that many have drawn the practical conclusions from these pernicious doctrines. They have cast aside all self-restraint and give themselves up entirely to the pursuit of pleasure. They wish to make the best of the brief day that is vouchsafed them and crowd into it the fullest measure of sensual gratification. Materialism has become the philosophy of their lives and in harmony with it they shape their conduct. It is sad to see that in many instances even the young have adopted this unholy creed and follow it out in daily practice. Truly, the teaching of materialistic science is beginning to bear bitter fruits. The unfortunate victims of the materialistic teaching of the age are to be pitied, for they miss the best that life can give. Man is not constituted that way that mere sensual pleasure could really give him true happiness. His whole being longs for better and higher things. His very soul is starved by this false materialistic teaching that denies the spiritual nature of man.

Man cannot find satisfaction in materialism. It makes no appeal to his better and finer nature. It does not call into play that which is heroic and noble in him. It is the stultification of his purest aspirations and his most imperious yearnings. It makes his life a ridiculous

face and human existence a veritable nightmare. Those who rob man of his eternal hopes render an ill service to him and condemn humanity to unrelieved misery. For without such hopes life becomes oppressive in its futility and horrible emptiness. We need not, then, be surprised that where materialism prevails genuine happiness ceases and the joy of living vanishes. For man cannot become reconciled to the thought that all his struggles are meaningless and that there is nothing of permanent value in his striving and in his sacrifices. Man loves to think that his life has a purpose and that no pitiless, everlasting night shall descend upon him and swallow up all his works without leaving of him even the faintest memory.

Man will turn away in weariness and disgust from the cheerless gospel of materialistic science. He will embrace with renewed earnestness the glad tidings of Christianity which restores his dignity and refreshes his spirit. In that true gospel he finds ideals that kindle his imagination and motives that give him adequate strength to bear the ills and afflictions of life. Here he finds the inspiration that he needs to carry on the warfare against evil. The degrading creed of materialistic science can never be a substitute for the ennobling and consoling gospel of Christianity; for man's better self revolts against a materialistic interpretation of the universe.—Catholic Standard and Times.

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