

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. ON THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

"Keep your Sabbath, for it is holy unto you; he that shall profane it, shall be put to death; he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of his people." Exod. 31, 14.

The Pharisees permitted the saving of an ass or an ox on the Sabbath day, but considered the healing of the dropsical man a crime. Such reasoning must be considered either as the height of absurdity or clear hypocrisy, and yet their actions are far less culpable than the contempt with which so many Christians of the present day treat the observance of the Sunday.

The Sunday is the day of the Lord, but, alas, many Christians make it a day of the devil, by spending their time in frivolity and sinfulness. Sunday is a day on which we should advance nearer to Heaven, but unfortunately, it is one on which many proceed to eternal perdition. The day of the Lord has become one of harvest for the devil. A terrible truth of which you will be convinced if you consider what commandments God has given us, what duties He has imposed upon us through His Holy Church, and how these obligations are discharged.

Amidst the rolling of thunder and the flashing of lightning, God spoke on Mt. Sinai: "Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant nor thy maid servant, nor thy beast nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Exod. 20, 9. This is the solemn commandment which the Lord of Heaven and earth has given. In the Old Law, the seventh day of the week was the Lord's day; in the New Law it is Sunday, the first day. It was changed in memory of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost. But by changing the day from the last to the first of the week, the law of keeping it holy was not changed, but remains in force.

But where do we find obedience to the divine mandate? Who could count the Christians who violate the sanctity of the Sunday, not from necessity nor from any legitimate cause, but from sinful indifference to the command of God. There are many, who, as it were in contempt of this commandment, make the Sunday a day of work and debauchery and then keep the day following to rest from the work they have done for Satan and hell. Do not be surprised that for them Sunday is a day of harvest for the devil.

This becomes more apparent if you consider the duty which the Church imposes upon us this day and the manner in which this obligation is observed. The Church commands us to hear Mass on all Sundays and holy days of obligation, and our Lord ratifies this precept of the Church by saying: "He that heareth you (My Church) heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." Luke 10, 16, and again: "If (thy brother) will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." Matt. 18, 17. How many such heathen and publicans does not each Sunday present to the All-seeing eye of God? These blind unfortunates cannot devote one day to the salvation of their soul; not one hour to the service of God by assisting at the most sacred of all mysteries, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and fulfilling an obligation that binds them under pain of mortal sin. They would rather lose their soul, than give the honor due to God, edify their neighbor and pray for the necessary graces. Add to these the number who go to Church, but who come late, leave during Mass or who by their indifference or scandalous behavior in the sanctuary of the Lord, heap grievous sins on their conscience. Consider these sad truths and you will understand why hell rejoices at the approach of Sunday.

The performance of servile work and even the neglect of Mass are not the greatest crimes committed. The sanctity of the Lord's day is still further outraged by innumerable dissolutions, immoderate drinking, sinful plays, and excesses of all kinds. It seems as if during the week some had no time to offend God and barter their soul to the devil, and that they must make up in a hundredfold manner for lost time on Sunday. This is the principal day on which are committed most of the crimes that find their conclusion in the jails or on the gallows. Sunday is the day for forming licentious acquaintances, of mingling with dangerous companions, and of engaging in sinful amusements. All these are occasions where innocence is destroyed, and body and soul are given over to ruin and destruction. Sunday is the day of riotous drunkenness, of consequent quarrels, of cursing and blaspheming. Sunday is the day of tears for so many wives and children, whose husbands and fathers squander the last penny, in consequence of which they must hunger during the rest of the week. Sunday is the day on which pride and vanity reign, where slander finds most time to spread its venomous lies; Sunday is the day which is spent in reading those detestable romances that undermine faith and morality.

But enough of this. You will be convinced without further enumeration, that more sins and crimes are committed on this day than during the other six days. What a terrible truth, and yet Sunday is the day of the Lord. Must not sorrow fill the heart of every Christian who loves God and sees this day so fearfully outraged? Let us be determined not to swell this sinful throng, that the day of judgment may not find us among

the number of those who profaned the Lord's day. Let us keep holy the Sunday by glorifying God and attending to the salvation of our soul. No unnecessary servile work shall desecrate it; no sinful dissipation sully our conscience. On this day let us especially honor God by our fervent prayers, by faithful and pious attendance at the Holy Sacrifice, and by frequently performing the sacraments. If we faithfully perform this, our first and most important duty, then we may also enjoy innocent pleasures and recreations. But all our amusements must be of such a nature that our Guardian Angel may rejoice with us and that our death-bed these amusements may not be the cause of our sorrow. Amen.

PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY.

BY A PROTESTANT MINISTER.

XLVIII.

Sacred Heart Review.

Had Doctor Littledale been a scientific, that is, had been a patient and candid inquirer, even supposing him to have known no part of the Jesuit Constitutions except the chapter which turns on the effect of the vows and precepts, he would easily have ascertained the impossibility of interpreting "obligare ad peccatum" to mean "to bind to the commission of sin." The obligation everywhere assumed in this section is a Divine obligation, mediate, but real. How now can there be a Divine obligation to sin? What is sin? The transgression of a Divine obligation. If there is an obligation to do anything which ordinarily may not be done, it would thereby cease to be sin. For instance, it is unlawful for me to take a human life. Yet if I am a sheriff or marshal, I may lawfully be required by the government to execute a murderer or pirate. This obligation is immediately owing to the government, yet it could have no force on the conscience unless it were ultimately ratified by God. Imagine now a law book saying: "The citizens are not obliged to commit the crime of homicide unless required by the government." Except by mere servility of speech, which no one will impute to the anxiously pondered words of the Jesuit Rule, and which, if imputed, would discharge it of moral fault, such a code, civil or religious, could only be given out by a body of lunatics.

I find it an absolute impossibility to understand the mental state of those who, like Littledale, accuse the Jesuits, and also the Holy See, of authorizing, and that not by oblique insinuation, but explicitly, in a solemn formula, the commission of sin. Littledale knew perfectly well that Loyola, Faber, Navier and the other Jesuit Founders, were carefully instructed, sober-minded Christian priests. He knew that they were fully persuaded that their new purpose and Institute were eminently helpful to the glory of God and the general good, and to the Christian conflict with every form of evil and sin. This solicitude to nerve the brethren up to the warfare against sin, in all its varieties of form, pervades the whole of the Constitutions. Littledale, moreover, knew perfectly well that the Founders, and also the Pope who ratified their Rule, had been from childhood instructed, that the Divine Excellence, by the necessity of its own nature, cannot possibly authorize anything which is intrinsically evil. The only possible way in which their education would have allowed them to regard such a hideous proposition would be that which their younger colleague Ballarmine expresses: "The only answer to such a heresy is the stake."

My readers will not have failed to notice in me not only perplexity but a certain bewilderment in taking account of the mental attitude of Doctor Littledale and such as he in this matter. I have indeed in thought gone round and round the possibilities of their point of view, without reaching any satisfactory conclusion. All that I can suggest is, that, being ready for any malevolent interpretation, they seized the first that presented itself in the sound of the words, without thinking any farther, without making inquiry into the long established sense of this familiar formula, without once considering the implications of their chosen meaning, without ever asking whether it could possibly be accorded to the fundamental principles of Christian and Catholic theology. It stands out in their mind as completely distinct from everything else as if the Jesuit Order, and the Holy See no less, were no part of the Catholic Church, and no part of the Christian world. They are usually supposed to be, for better or worse, very intimately connected with both.

Another thing deserves note. We are all prone to imagine that whatever appears to us evil is evil in its own consciousness. Protestantism at the beginning, and for a long while, regarded itself, not as a purer, more evangelical Christian doctrine, but as the only true religion. Even the more mildly judging seem to have had no scruple in using the naively insolent style that long prevailed in Germany: "The princes and cities of the true religion to the princes and cities of the other religion." When now the Jesuit came to check the triumphant advance of the Reformation southward, the exasperated Protestants could see in them nothing but Satan and his angels in person. This temper is far from having died out yet, and helps to explain, though it in no way justifies, this monstrous misinterpretation. A patient and candid inquirer, having some general knowledge of history and Catholic theology, even though we suppose him to have as yet

looked at no other part of the Constitutions than this section, could not well fail to come out, in the end, with the following paraphrase, which accurately represents its purport.

"We wish the brethren to understand that by their vow and promise they are held bound to the faithful observance of this Institute, so far as applicable to them individually. They are not to be negligent or careless of any part, for this would be a breach of their vow. Yet we do not want them mechanically bound up to the observance of every precept. This would be to reduce them to a lower level of Christian excellence. We desire the controlling motive of their observance to be, 'not the fear of offence, but the love of perfection.' There is indeed a central and immovable nucleus of the Institute, which we can leave to no man's option. The Four Vows have always, not by command of a superior, but intrinsically, the power of binding the brethren up to the point of sin, and of mortal sin. A Jesuit who neglects any one of the Three, or, if he has taken it, the Fourth, is ipso facto 'obligatus ad peccatum mortale.' For all inferior precepts, however, we commit him to his general good will and sense of obligation, and to his best judgment in each conjuncture. He should, if possible, observe the letter of each precept. Yet, if in his best judgment, then and there, charity and the purpose of our Institute are better served in passing it by, let him be free to do so. He must not then hold himself 'bound up into sin, mortal or venial,' nor even, like a Franciscan to monastic penalty. We do not wish our Rule to be flaccid, but we do wish it to be elastic. In the surging dangers of these times, we must not moor ourselves too closely to ancient observance, but must advance, still farther in that path of wise accommodation to changing necessities in which the four Mendicant Orders have long since preceded us.

Yet it is plain that to allow universal discretion for the inferior precepts would render our Company far too weak and bending. Judgment and self-directing power vary from man to man. We must always have at hand the means of tightening up our Rule whenever we perceive that a brother is becoming a little loose in his interpretation of it. Accordingly, we ordain that every Superior, by an injunction given in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ or by virtue of Obedience, may always, for any subordinate, endue any inferior precept with the same power 'of binding up into sin,' which always inheres in the Four Vows. He may, however, if he thinks best, provide that a brother negligent even of this solemn command shall only be 'bound up into venial sin.'

The Jesuit Crier is so peculiarly the point of Protestant attack, that my readers of either religion will still be pleased to have me treat this famous Rule somewhat in extenso. I have been accused by Protestant friends of excessive hostility to the Jesuits, yet at all events I do not want them calumniated. Being a great admirer of Port Royal, I would faintly imitate the famous Arnold, who, as Sainte-Beuve says, much as he hated the Jesuits, was always ready to defend an injured Jesuit as an injured Janesmit.

Charles C. Starbuck.

Andover, Mass.

STEVENSON'S RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE.

The following very interesting information about the lamented Robert Louis Stevenson and the child of his step-daughter, Mrs. Isabel Strong, some of whose Samoan letters have recently been republished in the Review, is furnished by a correspondent of one of the Sydney (N. S. W.) papers:

"We had come to talk about Samoa," writes the correspondent, describing an interview with Monsignor Broeyer, the vicar-apostolic of the islands, "and we told the bishop so. But when we should have been framing questions about Mataafa, a vision came to us of a lonely height overlooking the sea, and a still more lonely tomb that covered the last resting-place of Robert Louis Stevenson.

"It was not necessary, but we asked:— 'Did you know Stevenson?' 'Bishop Broeyer smiled. 'I knew him very well,' he said, 'for I often visited him at Vallima. Not so often as he wished me, though. He often reproached me for not coming more frequently, but what could I do? Had I gone too much it might have aroused jealousy on the part of the English consul. Stevenson was very partial to Catholics, you know.'

"Yes, we did know, and we thought—at least it had often occurred to us in times of our crossed passages in some of Stevenson's letters, that it was just possible that he might have— Well, we insinuated our thoughts to Bishop Broeyer. 'He grew very grave and was silent for a time; then with deep conviction turned to us earnestly. 'I have every reason to believe,' he said, 'that had not death struck him down so suddenly, without a moment's warning, he would have become a convert to the Catholic faith. He thought deeply on religious matters, and that his heart was turned towards Catholicism there can be no doubt. He was singularly free from any taint of sectarianism, and on religious matters thought that none should be coerced. He asked his step-daughter's (Mrs. Strong's) boy what religion he would like to be brought up in—Protestant or Catholic? 'I would like to be a Catholic,' said the lad. Whereupon Stevenson brought him to me and he

was baptized in the Catholic faith. The lad, I believe, is now being educated in America.'—Sacred Heart Review.

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