

CONFESSION.

An Eloquent Sermon by Rev. Charles H. McKenna, O. P.

The mission at St. Mary's Church, Beverly, was fittingly closed by an address by Rev. C. H. McKenna, O. P., in the Town Hall, which was listened to by an audience of one thousand five hundred or more. There were present on the platform several priests from neighboring towns, and the speaker was briefly introduced by Rev. Wm. Ryan. In doing so he said he was one that most of the audience was acquainted with. "The people of Beverly are fair-minded, and as some have seen fit to give one side detrimental to us, I know of no better way than to hear the truth from the rev. gentleman who will address you. There is no fitter or more eloquent exponent on any question of interest to our church than the present orator who will address you to-night, and it gives me pleasure to introduce Rev. C. H. McKenna."

Father McKenna spoke for over an hour and was attentively listened to, and was frequently applauded. Among other things he said: "I should feel flattered at the remarks of Father Ryan if they had not placed me in an awkward position, for I do not feel that I am a representative in the light he has placed me. My labors for the past twenty-five years have been spent in teaching the law of God and keeping it. I have lived up to the teachings of the Church, and as I have said, I am not a controversialist. I am here to-night to speak on the Catholic view of the confessional; my language shall be simple and the truth shall appear in its sublime grandeur, and leave it for you to judge whether it is one-sided or not."

"It is not my object to create a bad feeling, or arouse your passions—far from it; for I believe the true mission of Christ was faith toward all, for it was the Divine Master who said, 'Love your enemies.' Do unto others as you would be done by." It is the golden rule recognized by all men. I would not say a word that would be unjust to my neighbor or in any way interfere with his pursuit of happiness. We are all children of God, and desire to enjoy all social advantages here and

HEAVEN HEREAFTER. "Religion must be something to satisfy the soul, and one that will not do this is not divine. The soul seeks the beautiful, and the Church of Rome says: 'Come to me and I will teach the truth, infallible, eternal and everlasting. Come, possess it in peace and in death.' To-day the Catholic world is in perfect peace, in one faith and one baptism. The soul longs for the beautiful, and the Church says, 'Come to me and I will teach you the beauty of architecture and painting; as I inspired the great masters, so now we gaze upon the beautiful in our churches.'"

"The soul seeks the good—not the good in shadow, but in reality—and the Church says, 'Come to me and I will teach the good and sanctify your soul, administer the sacraments that you may freely approach my altars. I will give you your God veiled in the sacrament that you may find eternal peace. For He has said, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him, even to the last day.'"

"There are other desires of the heart. There are virgins who seek of the Divine Master to remain so. St. Paul says: 'She that is married seeketh to please her husband, and those who dwell in the house of the Lord the length of her days.' So these Sisters enter our convents and devote their lives to the care of the orphan child, the hospitals, the education of the orphan, relief of the sick and aged, and care for the neglected; to all in distress there is a daughter and sister. The Church sanctions this work which gives comfort to the soul."

"There are young men who accept the divine instruction to 'give up all and follow Him.' They dress in rude garments, and to the monk all men are brothers and all women sisters; their labor is for all people. The Church says, 'Christ's blessing be with you.' "The young man and woman stand before the altar; the Church blesses that marriage and stands ready to protect it against the whole world, and no tyrant can sever that bond, for 'what God has joined together let no man put asunder.' The heart has other desires, and

THE CHURCH SAYS to the heart that is troubled, confide in me; you can come to your spiritual adviser with all the secrets of your soul and he will never betray you, but will hold them as sacred as his life." The speaker gave several instances where confessions had been made by Protestants to Catholic priests, and of the Irishman who went to St. Clement's Episcopal Church, in Philadelphia, in mistake, but would have to be heard to be appreciated. It has never been known in the history of the Church that a Catholic was afraid. He has confidence in his priest, to whom he has told his sorrow and his sin, made known his innermost heart, and he knows he will never betray his confidence, but will give him that consolation which comes from God. There is a natural desire in every heart to make a confession of sin. How many instances do we see daily! A man who has committed a murder can't die before he unburdens his soul of the weight upon it. The speaker related several instances to prove his assertion. "Is confession necessary for forgiveness of sin? Yes, for confession of sin began almost with the dawn of the history of the world. Adam

rebelled and then hid in fear of the Lord. And the Lord asked him why, and if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit. The Lord knew he had, but He asked, that Adam might make a confession; both he and Eve confessed; but for that God might have destroyed both the soul and the body. Cain when asked: 'Where is thy brother?' told a lie, and a mark of degradation was put upon him for all times."

God Himself commanded confession. Father McKenna read many extracts from a work compiled by Hayes bearing on this subject, then said: "The very teaching of the Church is that a man should make satisfactory reparation for injury or wrong done his neighbor in any way. He is bound by the law of God, as well as justice, to make such reparation. (Prov. 28, 13.) 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but

WHOSO CONFESSETH AND FORSAKETH them shall have mercy.'

"Make a confession, but not to every man; as you don't confess your bodily ailments only to the physician who can heal you, so with sin, confess it only to those who will heal you of it. 'And there went unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.' (Mark 1-5.)"

"A man does not need to confess his sins to God, he simply tells Him what He already knows, but as He has appointed a tribunal with power to absolve sin in His name, there is the place to confess it. 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' (Mark 16-16.)"

"Christ said, 'Thou art the Son of the living God.' And Jesus said to Peter: 'I will establish My Church and build it on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I give you the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, and what ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.'"

"The keys of the kingdom were the power to take away sin, for take away sin and Heaven is within you. You have sin in your soul, and sin and God cannot dwell together. Did the Lord give power to forgive sin expressly? I say he did, and for proof refer to John, 20th chapter. Jesus appeared unto His disciples and said, 'Peace be unto you,' and showed them His hands and side, and said, 'As My Father sent Me, so I also send you.' He breathed on them, they received the Holy Ghost and said: 'The sins you forgive shall be forgiven them, and those you hold shall be held against them.' Christ said at one time, 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.' The Son of Man has power to destroy sin. 'As the Father gave me I give to you.' St. Paul and the others were placed in the position to reconcile man with his God. He breathed on them; it was a special power with a special object. There is no

POWER TO FORGIVE without confession. A judge could not give a sentence in a case until he knew the case. You say, 'You are not an apostle, nor were you one of His disciples.' Was this power given for the benefit of His disciples or the whole people? We often hear people say Christ died for all sin. If He did, why was it that when He appeared again He gave His commands to His disciples, and sent them into the world for the benefit of poor sinners. The apostles died, but sinners will live to the end. It would be unworthy of God to give the secret of His healing power to a few, and have it end with them. As it was necessary in the days of the apostles, so it will be to the end. Was George Washington sent into the world for the benefit of the republic, or was the republic created for the benefit of George Washington? Rather God raised up Washington that the republic might stand an asylum for the oppressed of all nations. Washington died, but the President lived; Jefferson, Grant and Garfield died, but the President lives, and the true lover of liberty will wish to see the President live to the end of the world."

"If God had chosen the good of the people and the President lives, so does the President live over the Church, he has appointed. St. Peter died, Leo died, Pius died, others have died, but the Pope lives, not to rule one republic, but for one thousand nine hundred years has the power been delegated to the Church."

"You ask 'Can you forgive sin?' That depends on how you interrogate me. If you ask me as Mr. McKenna, I say no, but as Father McKenna, I say yes. For instance, the governor of this State says a man shall be hung, and he is executed; if he caused it to be done as a private citizen that was murder, but in his official capacity it was legal. I forgive sin in the name of God, whose name I reverence. There is no power in the priest, but he is only God's agent. A locomotive is on the rails; the engineer pulls open the throttle, and it speeds across the plain; the engineer is not the power, but only controls the power and puts it in execution. What the priest speaks is by power from heaven, and he forgives in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and then the soul rises like the sun, pure and beautiful."

FOR NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS has the Church existed in this world, and there have been good priests and bad ones. Men have broken away from their vows and the Church-Christ said 'No man can put his hand to the plough and look back.' And of all the men who have broken their solemn vows not one has dared to tell what he heard at the confessional, for the Omnipotent God would strike him dead, for what he has received it was not as

man but as His agent. A priest would be torn limb from limb rather than give up the secrets of the confessional. We hear it said the confessional is only of recent origin." In reply he quoted from a large number of authorities to prove to the contrary. "The question is, am I in the Church of Christ? If so it is my duty to obey; if I do not I am a rebel." He referred at length to the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and to the early history of the same. The Catholic was the first Church before the Reformation; then they believed the Pope to be the head of the Church; they believed in one God, one faith and one baptism. He spoke of St. Peter at Rome, and referred to the original histories in the old libraries as authority for those who would know the truth. He did not ask that the public look at one side only, but to "consider honestly both sides and judge for yourselves. Go to the original documents and not depend on every piece of modern history written to please or flatter. You will learn that up to the Reformation the world was governed by the Catholic Church. 'Christ was Divine and founded His Church on the rock, and God will abide with it to the end. The sun illumines the whole world and was created by God. What did it cost Him to establish it? He spoke and it was made. To establish His Church it cost thirty-three years of labor, and His presence is its foundation. The Holy Ghost is there commanding all men to unite with it. If Christ is the Son of God the Church must remain to the end, for it was established by the Son of God.'"

COMEDY OF CONVOCATION.

Methodists Discuss the "Shortcomings" of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Columbian. The Methodist convention last Thursday was remarkable for its disorder and confusion, want of harmony, and the scare of the Roman nightmare, which seems to pursue the "Ecumenicals" at all their meetings. Rev. Mr. Donnelly, an Irish Methodist, presided. This is a strange, a very strange, name to appear in such a body.

In the reading of the minutes reference was made to an "excellent impromptu address" which caused much disturbance. Objections were made to the use of the words "excellent" and "impromptu" and they were stricken out, notwithstanding Mr. Atkinson's motion to have the word "impromptu" retained, on the ground that was well understood that Theodore Hook's and Tom Hood's "impromptu" jokes were carefully prepared a week in advance.

Mr. Atkinson wanted laymen to occupy the chair, and declared that he had "an uncontrollable desire to knock down some American Methodist Bishop," and if he couldn't do it from the chair he would do it from the floor. This was intended for a John L. Sullivan joke.

Methodist federation was next considered, but oh! the chances for union were not detectable. This is not to be wondered at. When sections split from sections, there can be no possibility of unity, for the origin of Methodism was itself the outgrowth of a sect. Rev. Ralph Abernethy, of England, regretted that the proceedings had not been characterized by that spirit of harmony which was desirable. It reminded him of that verse of the old hymn:—

"Into a world of ruffians sent,
I walk on hostile ground."

A murmur went up at this quotation, which soon swelled into a storm, and the cries, "Mr. Chairman," "Mr. Chairman," "Mr. Chairman," resounded throughout the building. There was a regular, stiff squabble between Dr. Leonard and Dr. King, and for quite a time nothing could be done. The frightful disorder increased, until some one voted to adjourn. This was the only course possible, and the "Ecumenicals" assanulated.

The chief business of the morning was a paper by Rev. M. T. Myers—here's his title in full—President of the United Methodist Free Church, Rochdale, England, and his subject was "The Present Position of Romanism." The charges against "Romanism" were: "Uniform opposition to the free circulation of the Holy Scriptures." This charge has been answered thousands of times.

If Mr. Myers will send us 20,000 copies of the Douay version of the Bible, we guarantee to circulate them among the readers of the *Columbian* in one week. Catholics are already provided with Bibles; nevertheless, we will circulate this number, or any less number, of Douay Bibles with which we may be favored.

Second—"The second is her (the Catholic Church) settled purpose, and her unscrupulous methods of propagating and promoting her own interests." There is no objection to this charge, except the use of the word "unscrupulous." These were the only charges. It is pleasant to note that they are getting fewer and more feeble year after year. Of course, the speakers on the question of "Romanism" had their little spiteful flings at the Church, but they were devoid of anything worth special notice.

To do those gentlemen credit, it would appear that they have been giving the Church marked attention, and some of their utterances were noteworthy, for instance, Mr. Myers said: "No wonder she (the Church) is so strong and so successful when her propaganda are so united and energetic." The speaker continued: "The present occupant of the Chair of St. Peter is a man every way worthy of the position. But if we are not mistaken, there is no need to fear any attempt on

the part of Romanism to usurp the temporal power either in Great Britain or America." Perfectly right, Mr. Myers. He added: "The tendency of legislation among all English-speaking nations is against the domination in the State of any religious sect." Right again, Mr. Myers. It was a tedious, tough battle to break up the domination of "the Church as by law established" in Ireland, but we succeeded.

Now, here is a declaration to which we heartily subscribe: "Make all Churches equal in the State, give all fair play, and if in the race 'Romanism' can outrun us, we shall have only ourselves to blame, and on the head of Protestant Christendom be the eternal disgrace."

That's the talk, Mr. Myers, only that decency might have urged you to say Catholic Church rather than "Romanism." But, as the Englishman whose wife used to whack him, said, "It does her good and does me no harm," so if it does the Methodists any good to constantly rave about "Romanism," it won't do us any harm.

These silly attacks upon the Church are only contemptible. They are beneath further notice.

There are many excellent things about those Methodists; they are sincere, and live up to the truth as they know it. But their misfortune is that they seem not to care about the whole truth, nor will they venture into full examination of the whole truth in matters of religion. If they did this in the spirit that comes of truth, they would experience a mighty change.

BE GOOD CATHOLICS.

Catholics are not always careful to walk as circumspectly as they might. Many affect to despise the verdict of the world, but it behooves Catholics to conduct themselves so that their example may not have a bad effect on those with whom they come in contact.

Not very long ago we were in conversation with a non-Catholic, whose word we do not doubt. "In the office where I work," said he, "are several Catholics. They swear like pirates and drink like fishes. When remonstrated with, they laugh and say, 'Oh, we'll square matters next week with Father—' " Now, the chances are that these young men were as good, morally, as their associates; but look at the bad example they set. Would their non-Catholic fellows be apt to have a high respect for the sanctity and salutary influence of the confessional, after such a speech? We believe not.

While the world may be as bad, and worse, as those it judges, Catholics should strive to so comport themselves that the world will have scant room for condemnation. They owe this much to the Church they belong to and the holy religion they profess. And they can so live if they pray often and earnestly to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and approach the sacraments at frequent intervals.

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