

A POWERFUL SERMON.

REV. C. W. MORRILL DEFENDS
CATHOLICITY,On the Occasion of the Dedication of
the New Roman Catholic Church,
at Ware—A Grand Effort
Worthy of Careful Study.

The Springfield Daily Republic gives the following report of the magnificent sermon preached by Rev. C. W. Morrill, of New London, Ct., on the occasion of the dedication of the new church at Ware. It is with a two-fold pleasure that we reproduce this fine piece of eloquence; firstly, it is a grand defence of our religion; and secondly, it is from one whose name is well known in Montreal and whose numerous friends will be overjoyed to read his sermon.

Rev. Mr. Morrill took as his text, John xx: 21, 22, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He spoke as follows: Life at the bottom may appear an inexplicable riddle. Its sad complications may sorely puzzle us. At times it might seem that we are walking in the dark and that we have no reason for living. Whence we came and whither we go may seem a mystery to us, and to shun pain, and daintily sip life's pleasures may seem the true philosophy. But when the human soul has any religious principle, things alter. There comes a solution for life. When man lives by faith the mysteries clear up. The majority of human beings are dominated by the religious principle and are aggressive believers in the supernatural. We Americans are firmly convinced of the existence of God, and we maintain the Christian conception of the Deity, but at the same time we all subtly feel the existence of our free will, and are independent and proclaim our liberty.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Roman pontiff are feared and dreaded, and the hearts of many men quake at the direful troubles they are expected to visit upon a free people. And why this opposition to authority, why this denunciation and dread and fear? Not that men deny its existence, but that they are ignorant of its claims and purposes. They simply deny its right to exist. To many authority means tyrannical, brutal force. The fresh life and the new blood and the new learning bounding and leaping in the renaissance period flashed a look of scorn at any voice that tried to moderate its ardor and regulate its triumphs and progress toward our present civilization. With the discovery of printing and the revival of learning, comes the fierce, wild unreasoning hatred so characteristic of youth against the past, and those principles and motives that had fashioned and moulded it. How much of beauty and strength and value living scholars are now discovering in the middle ages! and how frankly and cheerfully do they acknowledge that those very elements so strongly unpopular in our day were the basis and foundation of that admirable age and civilization. What we all need is to rid ourselves of certain distorted and erroneous ideas that have resulted from the 16th and the 18th century revolutions. That we may come back, then, in obedience to his recognized need, let us away with the gross, materialistic, and wholly unchristian conception of what authority is. The word "divine" explains the whole question.

Not only authority in the church, but in every other domain. Life has as its source, has as its crown and prestige and empire, a quality, a temper, power and character not human, something not of man, an essence divine. There is no power, no authority, except from God. It is not as a man that the German Emperor or the President of the United States exercises political authority, that the magistrate executes judicial authority, the Pope or the bishop his religious authority or the father and head of the family domestic authority.

The authority manifested by these men in their respective spheres is of divine investiture. Authority comes from creation. To be an author it is necessary to be a creator, and whoever is an author is an authority, and there is no authority save by an author. But to

creatures, the works of his hands. God communicates his authority in the same measure that He communicates the power to create. Behold that man raised up by Providence, as we say, to create and restore in the breast of a great nation social order and public peace. And the order he restores does he not conserve and maintain by virtue of his authority as creator and author in the same way and manner as God maintains the universe and the works that slipped into being from the fiat of his will? Again, my brethren, behold a man in another sense and in a sense more divine still, an author and creator. We call the man a father, and he is an authority in the family, and the woman associated with him in this great work of creation and authorship shares his royalty and partakes of his authority. There is another step yet, and as you will perceive, a higher, where man becomes author and creator and consequently authority. The priest, the bishop, the supreme pontiff; that man that stands between God and humanity, a simple human means and instrument by which and through which God creates the supernatural life in our souls. We could go further yet. We could speak of literature, that vast reservoir of human thought and human living. As you come in contact with the great names, see the great lights in the literary firmament shine out, and if you are interested in a particular subject, a certain group of names instantly suggest themselves to you as an authority. They have created these precious masterpieces and their very authorship makes them recognized authority in their line.

Have we not enough? Why, it must now be quite plain and clear what we mean who believe not only that authority exists, but that it must and has the best of reasons for existing. But perhaps some one replies: We fear God. All that is human and natural rebels against the divine and supernatural. The great pagan instinct to snugly nestle down into nature, to be pleased and satisfied with the material splendors around us now, familiar and real as they are to us, is far preferable to coming into lawful contact with God, even though he shadow himself under human form. We prefer the tangible to the mysterious. It must be granted, my brethren, that this feeling exists to-day, as it has always existed in the breast of man.

And I think we can explain this singular fact by admitting that men dread authority, yes, hate it and are jealous of it, because of the fear that it menaces, that it rivals and is the arch-enemy of liberty. I declare boldly, therefore, that it is tantamount to say that there is essential opposition and antagonism between authority and liberty. No, liberty is the daughter and authority is the mother. We are not free thinkers, but we think freely. Can the king who maintains order in society be at war with the liberty of the citizen? Can the father whose duty it is to use authority over his child be at war with the child's right liberty? Is not the true liberty of the child the sweet liberty to obey the father's command? Where there is law, there is the liberty to follow the law; where there is authority, there is the liberty, also God-created, to obey.

Brethren, if what has been said is true: if the essence of authority is a participation of the creative power of God, it is very easy for us to understand why this emotion, that is to say, this sympathy or antipathy, this attraction or repulsion, is never greater than when it concerns the unparalleled authority that we call the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. The Church actually poses herself before humanity as the highest power that creates with God, and as the most complete expression of divine things.

You have here the secret of the incomprehensible emotion that she has always excited for so many Christian centuries, of the noise that for 2000 years has been made over her, that she is the ship plowing through the storm-tossed waves of time, carrying God himself to humanity. Why do the heathen rage? Why have the schismatics, the heretics and sectarians for all time declaimed against her? Because she is the kingdom of truth and the robe of Christ. Because she has reiterated: "I am the divine authority—I am God in humanity." The history of Europe is the history of the church and this claim explains all the great epochs of that history. An institution without sword to protect and without soldier to defend, yet invincible against the attacks of every terrestrial movement, because

she is the incomparable representative of God upon earth. Yes, we may even say that it is a strong proof of her divinity that she has always had the power of creating enemies.

And what is the Catholic church, my brother, with her authority over us all? When we name the church do we speak of a social club, of a society for ethical culture, of an institution intended to propagate religious truths and knowledge of spiritual things? No: we Catholics conceive of the church as something far different. There is more dignity, more importance and more solemnity, shall I say, in our definition of it than this. We teach that the church is nothing less than the permanent incarnation of the Son of God.

The church was instituted by Jesus in the first place to apply the fruits of redemption to humanity in establishing a society of souls and in satisfying also the imperative need we all have for peace, for union, for association and for teaching each soul in particular, with undoubted authority, the truth, the way and the life. The church is necessary under a double title as a society and as an authority.

Such is the church according to scripture and according to tradition and such ought it to be according to reason. Then finally about the word we so often hear, that outside the church is no salvation. Must a man be a Catholic, belong to the Catholic church in order to be saved? It is a certain principle that our faith confesses, proclaims and repeats with established conviction, for its foundations are on the word of God, and human reason itself recognizes how true, just and proper it is, that outside the church there is no salvation.

The Bible tells us that Christ wishes the salvation of all men, and secondly that He wishes it by the way of and through the church. "The Son of man came to save that which had perished." "Before God our savior who wishes all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

And behold the conditions: Obedience to his will; and his will—that there should be but one God, one faith and one baptism. Outside the true worship of the true God, away from the one faith, without the one baptism, there can be no salvation. You cannot restrain and limit Christ. You have to choose between two sides,—to renounce Jesus Christ, the church and salvation, or accept the offers of Jesus made you in his church for redemption. If one is able to be saved outside the church, the cross is but folly, the apostle's creed but a page to be torn up, the decalog only a law to be abolished, the sacraments but mere signs without virtue or efficacy, and the prayers that we address to God feeble cries to which he is inensible. Once it is felt that the monopoly is lost, that the privilege of saving souls is not the church's, that there is no further need of expecting certainty and truth in this world, we go back to the speculations of the heathen; there is no way of life traced out for us and no happiness here or hereafter to be conquered.

But what is it to be outside the church and by consequence excluded from salvation? Nothing is more uncertain or more mysterious. "Many," says St. Augustine, "appear to be without the church and are within; many appear to be within and are without." There are then in the church visible and exterior souls who are not of her; while there are seemingly without the church souls that are of her. It is impossible for us to say who is elected or who reprobated in the church visible and invisible. What is plain and clear to the logical mind is this, that the church is the divine institution of Christ; that it is Christ himself working in the world for the world's redemption from every form of evil; that it is the one great force and power and authority that has been able to stand unbroken before the storms and changes of these many Christian centuries, and that consequently it is the duty of every man, recognizing this fact, to place himself in communion with her, no matter at what cost and with how great sacrifice, and to have for his portion the inestimable gift of one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

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