

"FORGIVENESS OF SINS."

The confessional is a matter which gives our non-Catholic fellow-citizens much thought and not a little worry. The annexed synopsis of a lecture upon this subject, delivered at the mission recently given in St. Peter's Cathedral, London, by Rev. Father Ryan, S. J., and which we copy from the London Free Press, will be of interest to those who have not the rock of Peter as a foundation for their religious beliefs:

"Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." (St. John, chapter xx, verse 23.) was the subject for an eloquent and forceful sermon delivered in St. Peter's cathedral last evening by Rev. Father Ryan, S. J.

"Go where you will into any part of the world and into any country, and you will find Catholics and when you find Catholics you will find the confessional," said the speaker. There is always the question, How did it come? A long untraced it? This will be the kernel of our discussion this evening.

"Many times the laity have been charged with introducing the confessional, but it would be more likely for them to oppose this painful, humiliating rite. The priesthood have had it frequently charged against them that they introduced it for their own ends and aims."

"Many times, the preacher said, he had heard that the cunning Catholic priests wanted to pry into the business of their people, to know all about their families, what was in their souls, and therefore it was said that Catholics are superstitious. Men had even said that the priests did it for money, but they could not and would not introduce it. A Catholic priest, said the preacher, is not so inhuman, unscrupulous, as to impose on his fellow-men."

"Cunning and as keen-sighted as the Catholic priests are accused of being, they would have at least exempted themselves from it. Yet every priest, Bishop, Archbishop and the humblest of laymen. Every week His Holiness the Pope kneels to a priest, a man like himself, and confesses his sins; and to the priest, also, nothing is more laborious than for him to sit in the confessional all day and listen to a story of sin, degradation and sorrow. If it were optional, and not a law of Christ, would a priest humble himself to go to confession?"

"A conspiracy of priests throughout the world it had been said started the confessional. That, said the preacher, was also absurd. It would be the same as saying that all the merchants and doctors of the world were leagued together to rob and cheat the people. One idea was just as absurd and impossible as the other."

"Then it was said that the fourth lateran council of 1215 made the law that all Catholics go to confession. But, said the speaker, their legislation was that every Catholic should go to confession once a year, but that does not say that the Catholics before that time did not go."

"Gregory VII. is blamed by unscrupulous persons for the starting of the confessional, but it would have been impossible for him to do so, at the time he was Pope he had a continued battle with all the 'overlords of Europe.'"

"Then history would have had an account of it, and also the time of the founder should it have been begun since the time of the apostles. And so, said the preacher, it could not have been started by man. The speaker then said that confession must then be a divine institution started by Christ while He was on earth."

A CONTROVERSY DRAWN FROM THE PROTESTANT BIBLE, WHICH, IN PART, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, BROUGHT EXCELLENT RESULTS.

FIGURES IN FAITH FORBIDDEN.
"Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (Romans xvi, 17)

According to St. Paul, the Romans unmistakably learned a definite doctrine pure and unadulterated, which was to be universal, unchangeable and eternal to salvation. No reforming or chloroforming it; no denominationalizing or sectarianizing it either. It was and is the Christian Doctrine, unalterably one and immutable, consequently, impossible to denominationalize or sectarianize; i. e., if we are in keeping with the teaching of St. Paul and we accept and recognize him as an inspired Bible authority.

Note well the nature of the divisions and offences. They are not divisions and offences contrary to ethics or even discipline, but they are contrary to doctrine as taught by St. Paul and his brother apostles and disciples. Therefore the divisions and offences referred to must be understood as doctrinal divisions and doctrinal offences, proving conclusively that the stamp of authority is given to but one doctrine—or "one faith" as is elsewhere recorded by St. Paul and that is the one doctrine established, which the one Church founded by the one divine Lord is commissioned to teach.

God is one. His Church is one. His doctrine is one. His Gospel is one. To preach any other Gospel is a gross violation of divine law; to teach any other doctrine or cause divisions in that doctrine is, likewise, a gross violation of divine law.

"MARK THEM."

Doubtless the apostle anticipated those purring innovators who thirsting for variety or notoriety would not even scruple to "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." Adding to or taking away from Holy Scripture is an offence, and, in like manner, adding to or taking away from, changing that Holy doctrine or changing the meaning of it, constitutes an offence, a transgression, a sin against that doctrine.

The very fact that there are sects, divisions and denominations, whatever have been their origin, title or doctrinal variances, shows indisputably a ruthless contravention of that Holy

Doctrine. How is it that otherwise fair-minded, well-disposed sectarians whose shibboleth is "Search the Scriptures," read Romans xvi, 17, but do not search into this vitally important text or yield compliance therewith, but practically, as a dead letter, from book, heart and mind, expunge the whole idea of oneness of doctrine and the two-fold injunction in behalf of that oneness? This is not all, however. When this essential part of holy revelation is once expunged, it is but the beginning and more follows in quick succession.

Not only is confusion precipitated, peace disturbed and charity estranged, but the defenders of that doctrine suffer and have suffered for no other reason than they uphold the inspired apostle of the Gentiles and the singleness and unimpairedness of his doctrine.

The scriptures must be fulfilled. "Mark them which cause divisions," etc. "Mark them"—this is what brings us into trouble, but St. Paul knew the difficulties and embarrassing position of the doctrinally faithful—know the practical results to follow, namely: affront, resentment, misunderstanding, misrepresentation and worse. But no account is taken of entanglements to ensue, conflicts waged or martyrdoms suffered, the doctrine must be preserved in all its purity, integrity and indivisibility.

Therefore, true to that doctrine, true to her principles and in pursuance of St. Paul's instructions, the Church can not, dare not, recognize or encourage doctrinal divisions or doctrinal offences. Divisions, although making up the aggregation of Protestantism, are not in her fold. She has never countenanced them and never will. This is her history and it covers nineteen centuries.

"AVOID THEM."

Referring to the founders of doctrinal divisions, St. Paul does not alleviate the burden laid on the Church with respect to its attitude toward those teaching doctrines curtailed or reformed. But in furtherance of his denunciation of doctrinal divisions and in terms more searching than the first he charges anew: "Avoid them."

As this command has not been repealed, is not mythical or obsolete, in the name of the Holy Bible which we profess to have, the Church but to enforce it? That she acts shows she exists, and that she is as rigorous and vigilant as ever. It is not that she loves her neighbor less, but she loves God first and, as His instrument, has a duty to perform. And this duty was by no means nominal or optional but positive and as God's holy doctrine is unchangeable and universal, the duty of the Church in the United States is as fresh and as clear and as binding as it was in the day of St. Paul.

To possess the sacred doctrine in toto is essential. To safeguard its identity is not less essential; hence, we are commanded to "avoid them which cause divisions," and, it follows, not only those which cause divisions, but the divisions themselves and all those who aid or abet them. Therefore, in the sense intended by St. Paul, which is the sense of the Church, we certainly do "avoid" them. No Catholic as is well known is permitted to attend their service or worship.

Do not call him bigoted, please, or brand him narrow and illiberal; for he is a conscientious, consistent follower of St. Paul, and regards him as an inspired authority.

Could the situation be reversed and had sectarians the Christian Doctrine in all its purity and integrity, they could not be so broad and liberal. In such event, they would "mark" and they would "avoid," but as it is they are sects manifesting and recognizing divisions and contrariety of doctrine.

They cannot both be a division recognizing divisions and at the same time marking them "which cause divisions" and avoiding them.

So the unbiological, unscriptural stand is the stand of their common adoption, leaving as it does a wide open, unbridgeable gap between them and St. Paul.

A SIMILAR AND DISMILAR COMPARISON.
But there is an obverse side to the medal. Many of our sectarian brethren have lived so long and grown so tall that their doctrinal garments have been remodeled. So they say, "We have outgrown dogmas, forms and forms." To meet this modern exigency the pulpit thunders and the welkin rings enjoining the "personal acceptance of Christ." The doctrinal acceptance is under an opiate.

If prejudice be not too strong and judgment not too weak, it will be seen that Holy Scriptures, in John the sixth chapter, furnishes a particular instance to fit this case. Christ had disciples and they walked with Him personally and they accepted Him personally, until the Lord of Hosts disclosed to them the mighty mystery of giving them His own Body to eat and His own Blood to drink. This was too much for many of them and they returned—too mysterious, supernatural and above all too preposterous.

They wavered, they withdrew, they walked with Him no more.

At least, we must give them credit for a measure of consistency. If they could not accept Him doctrinally they would not accept Him personally. A strange phenomenon presents itself today. We have among us divisions of the faith which are both like and unlike those that they are heartily willing to accept Christ personally, but not doctrinally; unlike them in that they do not intend to desert Him on account of any doctrinal "hard saying," but resolve to preach Him, profess Him, and propose to accept Him as a Personal Saviour.

Those fugitive disciples were not as resourceful and expeditious and compromising as many enlightened ones are to-day. They did not understand the sufficiency of personal acceptance and the elimination of doctrinal acceptance.

They were too short-sighted, too easily offended and in a twenty century business sense, too grossly obtuse, else, like denominational divisions, at least, they could have met the Son of God halfway, i. e., they could have accepted Him as a "Personal Saviour."

But they realized that to exclude the doctrinal and accept the "Personal Saviour" was mockery and duplicity.

Church Decoration

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Furthermore, they realized they could not deceive the Son of God; that He was not preaching to them the "acceptance of a personal Saviour," but in the most striking and emphatic language, coercive under penalty, the terms laid down for His divine acceptance were unqualifiedly and uncompromisingly doctrinal. Therefore they quit him, cutting off thereby the very means of life He vouchsafed them. To be without the doctrinal acceptance of Christ is to be without the means of "Life."

As doctrine among divisions has largely begun to wane and decline, it follows that its source—the Bible—commends less confidence and recognition. It is not surprising, then, that an Eastern sectarian minister has said to say: "Whilst in a former day the Bible among a number of our number was a fetish, it is now a fable."

To an extent, the doctrine of commercial, social and elite prominence has supplanted St. Paul's stern and inexorable doctrine of no divisions.

Note the hue and cry raised, in certain instances, if a man be morally run down; but if he be doctrinally a knave, it is a pardonable offence.

CONCLUSION.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." (I Cor. i, 10)

Who fails here to note the urgency and earnestness of St. Paul to maintain concord and unity? How serious, important and essential was St. Paul beseeching "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you? And yet he speaks the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you? And yet he speaks the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you?

God is perfect, He "is not the author of confusion," therefore He is not the author of "variance, heresy," sects or denominations "and such like," which are divisions and offences contrary to doctrine.

When divisions broke out in heaven as a penalty those who caused them as well as their adherents were cast out of heaven. Thus, they were marked and avoided, too.

On earth as a penalty those who cause divisions and offences contrary to doctrine are not only marked and avoided, but, according to Galatians v, 20-21, they are bracketed with other capital offences under the head of "variance, sedition, strife, heresy and such like" and "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

From all this it follows that, God being a God of supreme order and perfect system, there must be, and has been, but one, common Christian Doctrine, irrefragable and unalterable, taught by one infallible Church containing no sect, variance or division and recognizing none.

SCOTCH LOYALTY.

Editor of THE CATHOLIC RECORD:

Sir—With the exception of the Antigonish Casket, which had a special claim on their patronage, there is no paper so widely and generally read by the Catholics of the diocese of Antigonish as your excellent journal, THE CATHOLIC RECORD. They greatly appreciate its able championship of everything Catholic in its editorial columns week after week, and its selections make it an exceptionally welcome visitor in the Catholic home. It is, therefore, with considerable regret that they notice

the occasionally unkind words about the race to which the great majority of them belong. The diocese of Antigonish is thoroughly Scotch. Of the seventy-nine priests in the diocese fifty-five are of Scotch descent and all these fluently speak Gaelic, the language of their forefathers. The first bishop of the diocese, the late Bishop Fraser, was born in Scotland; his successor, the late Archbishop McKinnon, was Scotch descent, and so is our present venerable Bishop, Right Rev. John Cameron, D. D., who is a thorough master of the Highland tongue and has written in that language a beautiful work on Christian doctrine. The recently appointed Bishop of Victoria, B. C., Rev. Dr. McDonald and Archbishop McDonald, who a few years ago retired from the See of Harbour Grace, both natives of this diocese, are also of Scotch descent. Our forefathers came from several parts of Scotland, more particularly the western isles and the mainland of Invernesshire, where they suffered many cruel persecutions for their faith, and were as much down-trodden as were the Catholics in any part of Ireland. To-day we love and cherish the memory of our faithful Scotch forefathers, who preserved for us the true faith taught them by the great St. Columba, as we love the Irish race for their fidelity to the faith given them by St. Patrick. When the seventeenth of March comes around every year the Scotch Catholics of this diocese are just as demonstrative in their religious celebration of the memory of St. Patrick as their Irish neighbors, not because there are those who, through historical research, put forth the claim that St. Patrick was born in Scotland, but because, with a true Catholic spirit, they venerate the memory of one of the greatest saints of the Church, wherever he may have been born. They read, therefore, with much surprise the unkind words in your issue of March 27th, last: "If Irishmen in this country are now-a-days less demonstrative in their celebration of their national feast our Scotch and other neighbors are doing their best to rouse us from apathy. Their best is poor, insulting in their endeavors to be witty." The Scotch Catholics of this diocese (which is included in the phrase "this country") put forth "their best" to assist their Irish neighbors in religiously honoring the memory of St. Patrick, and you are so unkind as to tell us that "our best" is "poor," insulting and "vulgar." If Protestants of Scotch descent are insulting and vulgar towards Catholic practices and celebrations, the whole Scotch race cannot be held responsible no more than the whole Irish race for the Orange celebrations held in the city of Belfast and the rank orations delivered at the celebrations in Canada and the United States by some that are of Irish descent. In your issue of April 10th, commenting on the birthplace of St. Patrick you say: "The Lord be good to us, poor Irish, these hard times. They are trying to take our apostle with them on their knees, and you are so poor, insulting in their endeavors to be witty." The Scotch Catholics of this diocese (which is included in the phrase "this country") put forth "their best" to assist their Irish neighbors in religiously honoring the memory of St. Patrick, and you are so unkind as to tell us that "our best" is "poor," insulting and "vulgar." If Protestants of Scotch descent are insulting and vulgar towards Catholic practices and celebrations, the whole Scotch race cannot be held responsible no more than the whole Irish race for the Orange celebrations held in the city of Belfast and the rank orations delivered at the celebrations in Canada and the United States by some that are of Irish descent. 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