

The Catholic Record

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LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPT. 6, 1919

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The statement was made quite recently by a certain non-Catholic clergyman that the Sacrament of Penance or confession was something quite foreign to the teachings of Christ and His Gospel, and was nothing more than a mere comforting rite for those who believe in it.

This statement not only contradicts the manifest teachings of our Divine Master, but also ill accords with the evidence of history. Before proceeding, however, to show its falsity, let us define what is meant by the Sacrament of Penance. Penance is a sacrament of the New Law, instituted by Christ, in which forgiveness of sins committed after baptism is granted through the priest's absolution, to those who with true sorrow confess their sins and promise to satisfy for the same.

Everyone will admit that it is a matter of sad experience that even after we have been cleansed from sin by Baptism, we fall again. How, then, are we going to be reconciled with God since Baptism may be received but once? Has Christ overlooked this need of mankind by not providing us with a means of recovering God's friendship, forfeited by sin? On the contrary, He has given us an unfailing means of reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance in which the priest, as God's minister and in God's name, absolves penitents, who, having confessed their sins, are truly penitent and promise to make satisfaction.

The power of absolving from sins was conferred by Christ on the Apostles and on their successors in the priesthood. This doctrine, as we shall see, is based on Scripture, and both the doctrine and the practice are as old as the Church of God. On the contrary, the teachings of the Reformation on the matter were a decided novelty when first introduced; which fact should awaken deep reflection in the minds of sincere searchers after truth, for novelties in religion are always to be suspected.

A direct proof of the Catholic doctrine on the remission of sins is to be found in the twentieth chapter of St. John's Gospel (21:23): "As the Father hath sent me I also send you. When He had said this He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained."

It would seem that the mere reading of these words would convey their true meaning to the unprejudiced reader. We shall endeavor to show this by the following comments.

"Whose sins ye shall forgive." The word "forgive" can have but one meaning and the meaning should be obvious. It cannot mean, as the Lutherans contend it does, merely to declare that the sinner is forgiven. When we say that a person forgives we do not mean that he declares that some one else forgives. The act is his own. In the present case, it is true, the act of forgiveness on earth must be ratified by an act of forgiveness in heaven; but that is guaranteed by the promise and institution of Christ: "Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them," which is equivalent to saying, "the sins forgiven by you, are in very truth forgiven because they are in very truth forgiven by God."

In other words, God graciously regards the act of His minister and representative as though it were His own. The power conferred upon the Apostles was to be transmitted to

their successors in the priesthood. The mission which Christ had received from His Father, and in virtue of which He sent forth His Apostles must bear fruit in the Church to the end of time, and hence the powers conferred in the act of sending them forth, must be perpetuated in the Apostles' successors, Else, why did the Apostles themselves elect Matthias with full apostolic powers to take the place of Judas?

This power of binding and loosing is a judicial power and not to be used at random. The priests are the judges. They are to decide whether the sinner is worthy of absolution or not. Hence it is not hard to see that all this supposes self-accusation on the part of the sinner—or, in other words confession.

As an evidence of the belief of the early Church in the Sacrament of Penance, may be cited the testimonies of the various Fathers of the Church. Thus, St. Basil of Caesarea, in Asia Minor, (died 379 A. D.) wrote: "We must confess our sins to those who are appointed the dispensers of the divine mysteries (Reg. Brev. 286). The great St. Augustine of Hippo (died 430 A. D.) likewise clearly stated the mind of the Church on the matter when he wrote: "Let no one among you say, I do penance in secret and before God—God, Who knows that I repent in my heart, will forgive me. Was it to no purpose then: 'Whosoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven?' Was it to no purpose that the Church received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven?"

THE FAILURE OF THE SECTS

The dismal failure which would finally be the outcome of the principles of the Reformers, has ever been evident to all, save their own immediate disciples. To the present day, however, it has been reserved for the fact to be published from the very pulpits of Protestantism by their own clergy.

For a while the remnant of Christianity handed down from Catholic times helped to preserve against Rationalism, their tottering institutions; but, even that has been gradually disappearing under the solvent of private judgment and higher criticism, with the inevitable result that Protestantism is ceasing to interest men. This fact is now realized even by Protestants themselves.

Imagine a few years ago hearing such a topic as "What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?" discussed in a Protestant pulpit, and the conclusion drawn that "the church has failed miserably." Yet that was the subject of a recent sermon of Rev. J. W. Hoyt in a Baptist church in London. He is quoted by the Press as saying:

"The Church of today was not what God intended it to be; and the people of the Church did not want a minister who would tell them of their own sins, but one who would talk on science or philosophy. The Church had stood for radicals going into the pulpit and men and women had remained in their seats quite complacently, while these men denied the Deity of God. It must rid itself of men who teach that atonement is unnecessary. While men were in the pulpits denying the fundamentals of Christianity, the Church would draw further and further away from Christianity."

Moreover the entire reunion movement is nothing other than an admission of the failure of Protestantism; for it means a virtual undoing of the work of the various founders of the sects and a condemnation of their theological teachings. There was a time when members of the sects considered their particular creed to be the only true religion of Jesus Christ. Now all is changed, and even from the pulpit it is proclaimed that one sect is as good as another; that denominationalism is the result of obstinacy and intellectual pride and a decided obstruction to spiritual work.

Speaking of this matter, Rev. Dr. Manning, a Methodist minister of Stratford, Ont., recently said: "People are too much given to the belief that their particular denomination is just a little better than the others. I am convinced that this denominationalism is proving a direct hindrance to the spread of Christianity. The Christian who has the light of life as revealed in Christ, does not need to lean upon the teachings of the Church."

Another minister Rev. Dr. Reisner, of New York, thinks the whole difficulty of failure to interest people in Protestantism, and the wholesale abandonment of public worship in

the United States could be overcome by advertising. "The Church must sell itself by advertising. It must meet the competition of Sunday golf and automobiling. If we accept the statement recently to the effect that fifty million people in the United States do not go to Church, we may then consider every second person a possible customer."

Neither advertising nor church union with its consequent empty platitudes, can augment or even arrest the steadily diminishing Protestant congregations, whose actuating principles spell only dissolution and decay. All things human have their rise and fall. So it must be with the religions of human institution, no matter whether their spiritual ancestor be a Luther, a Henry VIII, a Calvin or a Knox. To only one Church has eternal youth been promised, namely the one true Church founded not by men but by Christ Himself; to which He has given the pledge of His Divine guidance for "all days, even to the consummation of the world."

THE STATUS OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA

The admission to the Peace Conference of the delegates of the various self-governing Dominions of the British Empire, cannot be understood otherwise than as a recognition that these Dominions are separate nations. It has been customary, in theory if not in practice, to consider us as coming under the jurisdiction of the "Home Government," which had power to legislate for us, though not to tax us.

It is true that our Governor-General is appointed by the Imperial Government and that his assent is necessary for the passing of laws and that he may veto or reserve legislation for the consideration of the Crown. But, as a matter of fact, one cannot recall in recent years of any interference of the Home Government in our affairs. We tax ourselves; we make our own commercial treaties and even vindicate the right to appoint, representatives to other countries.

Even in the British Isles, the bond of union between us and them is considered as a union of free communities, held fast by common traditions, similarity of interests, goodwill and loyalty to the mother country.

Professor Berriedale Keith, of Edinburgh, describes our relation to the United Kingdom as "one of alliance and not dependency." Lord Milner states that "the only possibility of a continuance of the British Empire is on a basis of absolute out-and-out equal partnership between the United Kingdom and the Dominions." An English journalist writes that "no one denies that any given Dominion might, if it so pleased, sever its connection with the mother country. These sentiments were voiced as long ago as 1900 by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. "We have got to a point in our relations with our self-governing colonies," he said, "in which I think we recognize, once for all, that these relations depend entirely on their free-will and absolute consent."

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL QUESTION IN GERMANY

Among the great national questions which loom before the broken Empire, that of religious education takes a foremost place. Of the hostility to the Church of the "Weimar" parliament there is no doubt, for long before peace was signed it was at work attacking the Catholic schools and making plans for the disestablishment of Religion. That these plans were not carried into effect is due largely to the splendid and uncompromising stand of the Centre Party, which continues under the Republic, as formerly under the Empire, to hold the balance of power.

The Imperial Government realized that every religion taught moral principles which tended to safeguard the foundations of the State and consequently made religious teaching compulsory for all. Under its regime the schools were Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, and the children of parents who professed no religion had to be instructed in the teachings of some recognized faith. No such institution as a non-denominational school was tolerated.

At the beginning of the Revolution, Herr Hoffmann, the new minister of worship, announced the abolition of all denominational schools. But in doing so he failed to reckon with the religious beliefs of the nation rendered stronger by the evils of warfare and the sufferings occasioned by the social upheaval.

In Cologne, the Cardinal acted with characteristic promptness and decision and from every parish in his vast diocese protests against the proposed changes were sent in. More than six million names were affixed to petitions demanding the continuance of religious instruction.

Despite this, the socialistic government was bent upon carrying out its intended programme, until the Centre Party threatened, if the plan were not abandoned, to secede and form a Catholic Republic. The Catholics of the Rhineland no more desire the partition of their country than do the Nationalists of Ireland; but there is a limit to their endurance of Prussian tyranny.

Rather than see not only the Rhineland, but Westphalia, the Black Forest, Upper Bavaria and the other Catholic districts form a separate confederation, the Government decided to compromise, with the result that religious teaching will continue as heretofore, with this exception, that its former obligatory character will cease to have effect.

Although the Socialists are at present in power, and predominate in Germany's coalition Government, it does not follow that they can socialize the country. Catholics form one-third of the population, and if German Austria joins the Republic they will be in even greater proportion.

Far from having suffered loss of vigour through the War, the Church in Germany has gathered strength, till it stands today, alone against infidelity, as Protestantism has all but ceased to be a factor in the life of the nation. For the first time in their lives, many of the clergy are having to deal with converts from Lutheranism and even from amongst the Jews.

German Catholics will insist on religious education in their schools. If they were able to successfully withstand Bismarck with all the force of the military Empire behind him, they are not likely to succumb to an unstable majority of Socialists.

SUMMER SCHOOLS

By THE GLEANER

A certain saint was asked, while playing a game of dominoes, what he would do if he knew that he would die within the next five minutes. He replied that he would continue taking his recreation, for that is what God willed that he should be doing at that particular time. Scripture assures us that all things have their seasons, that there is a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to labor and a time to play. There must be variety in our occupations if we would rejoice in our work and if we would be thoroughly efficient. Efficiency is the great idol of our modern educationalists, but their system falls far short of attaining efficiency because they forget that teachers are human beings, subject to human limitations and incapable of perpetual motion. A conscientious teacher who is busy in her classroom for six hours of the day, who devotes much additional time to the preparation of her work and who keeps up this regime for the nine months of the year, surely deserves her summer vacation. The reader will note that I used the feminine gender because unfortunately the great majority of our teachers are of the feminine sex.

A summer course in school gardening at the Guelph Model Farm may appeal to some as a holiday, but many whose tastes do not run in the line of pumpkins and turnips, or in whom family affection yearns for a few weeks' sojourn in the company of loved ones under the home roof-tree, may view the matter in a different light. I have, however, no quarrel with the Guelph agricultural programme. What does seem to me unwise is the attempt to sandwich in between school terms a further course of studies in order to qualify in some specialty or to obtain a higher teaching certificate. A person who does this acts very much like a traveller who, in order to save time, contracts indigestion by swallowing lunch at a railway restaurant. The first part of the teacher's vacation is taken up in plugging for the exams and the greater part of what remains is spent in feverish anxiety to know whether or not she has passed. Only about two weeks of free time remain before the yearly grind begins again, and in the case of our teaching Sisters this period often coincides with the annual retreat.

The teacher gets very little recreation during the time allotted to it, and neither she nor her pupils are allowed any during the school year. It would be a recreation both for the teacher and the pupils if the former were permitted to follow her own initiative at times and branch off on some interesting subject that the day's lesson suggested. But no, she and her charges have so much ground to cover, like the automobile speed fiend who is always in a hurry to get some where, that they may not stop to pick daisies by the rippling brooks. School life has become a dour, serious thing. The visitor—and here I speak of the intelligent visitor, not the time-waster—who would dare to make the pupils laugh or discourse to them on some subject not on the curriculum, is looked upon much as a member of the old kirk would view the sacrilegious person who would introduce music into church service. As dour Presbyterianism ended in spiritual bankruptcy so will the grueling process now in vogue in our schools end in physical and intellectual anemia.

Teachers have need of a vacation not only for the purpose of recuperating their health but also that they may avoid getting into a rut and that they may enlarge their intellectual vision. A summer school where our teachers could have the opportunity of listening to instructive lectures or inspiring addresses, meet in a social way members of the profession from various parts of the country and exchange ideas with them, and at the same time enjoy some suitable physical recreation, would indeed promise a very profitable vacation.

But few of our teachers can enjoy this luxury on account of financial or other impediments. They cannot go up to the mountains, therefore as much of the mountain as possible should be brought down to them. Why could not the Knights of Columbus, or some other Catholic society that is interested in education, arrange for the visit to several of our educational centres of eminent Catholic scholars? This would prove perhaps less expensive to some of our citizens than guaranteeing the payment of a travelling Chataqua troop, and the speakers would have an audience of appreciative and receptive listeners instead of satiated globe-trotters and ladies of wealth and leisure.

One thing that our school boards should do, and are bound in justice to do, is to give our teachers sufficient salary so that they may be able to take a year off to further qualify themselves, and not be obliged to submit to the nerve-racking ordeal of preparing for and writing on examinations during the sweltering weather at a Summer School.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

FOLLOWING UPON our remarks of last week upon the poet George Crabbe, the present sitting finds us in the mood for indulging in a few paragraphs of literary chit-chat which may interest a few at least of our readers. To the initiated there is no field of letters more fascinating than that which has to do with the habits and peculiarities of men of genius, who, each possessing the divine spark in varying degrees of retulgence in matter of habit or temperament, differ from one another as star differs from star in glory.

MANY MOONS ago we had something to say in these columns about English men of letters who were either genuine or reputed converts to the Catholic Faith, or at one time or another during their several lives had come more or less under Catholic influences. Among the former were John Milton, the author of "Paradise Lost," for whose death-bed conversion there are some shreds of evidence, inconclusive though they may be; William Wycherley, the dramatist, who won the Faith in his youth, lost it again, but, on the testimony of Pope, died humble and repentant; Samuel Garth, once famous as the author of "The Dispensary," a poem with a purpose, the friend of Pope and Addison, who, long drawn to the ancient Church, had the happiness in his last hours of being admitted to her communion. Among the latter, Gibbon, the title of whose great work "The Decline and Fall," typified his own unhappy career; and "Rare" Ben Jonson, who, at one period of his life a Catholic, fell away and died an exile from the Fold.

IN TURNING over the pages of the Dictionary of National Biography recently it came as somewhat of a surprise to us to learn that Chillingworth, whose "Religion of Protestants" has long been the mainstay of controversialists of that ilk, is also

in the latter category. He was a godson of Archbishop Laud, but was led by the arguments of a priest, Fisher by name, to espouse the Catholic Faith. This was about 1630. Shortly afterwards he crossed the channel to Donay with the intention apparently of studying for holy orders. He left Donay, however, in the following year, returned to Oxford and declared himself once more a Protestant. The unstable character of the man and the superficiality of his "learning" is reflected in his writings. In his own day he was by Catholic and Parlian alike termed a Socinian and an Arian.

FRANCIS, LORD Coltington, a statesman of celebrity, is another who made the journey "there and back" and "there again." During a dangerous illness at Madrid in 1628 he became a Catholic but lapsed on his return to England. In 1636, however, during another illness, he once more declared himself a Catholic, and, after considerable difficulty, was reconciled by the Papal Nuncio, Clarendon, in his "History," terms him a very wise man, and praises his "great self-command."

IT MAY NOT be generally known that Oliver Goldsmith, whose "Vicar of Wakefield," and "The Deserted Village," have delighted many generations of readers, came near to being the victim of an Irish eviction. General Robert Napier, to whom many lines in the "Deserted Village" refer, purchased the estate of Lord Dillon, including Lessoy (or Lessay), in 1780 and desiring to enclose a domain of about nine miles ejected all the tenants to the number of 700 persons, most of whom emigrated to America. Goldsmith, or Goldsmith's father, who was a tenant on the estate, was among the evicted, but, "having been from most exemplary people through many generations," was finally permitted to remain. It is further related that the Napier estate having become the subject of protracted litigation, which was not terminated until the year 1838, and the sale of Lessoy (or Lessay) having finally been determined upon, it was a question whether or not the place should be advertised as the "Deserted Village." On full consideration, however, it was thought such description might militate against the sale, and the reference was omitted. "Sweet Auburn," therefore, remains indeterminate.

BEFORE THE Pilgrims made Plymouth historic, a Catholic soldier named Winslade, proposed collecting the Catholic exiles on the continent and forming a settlement in America where they might practice their religion, while retaining their own language and habits. Sir Thomas Arundel, precursor of the Dukes of Norfolk, described as the "bravest Englishman of his day," seems not only to have taken up the project, but to have drawn into it the Earl of Southampton, a "bickory" Catholic, who had just conformed to the Established Church. Norwimbege, a part of the New England coast, was selected as the place for this settlement. A vessel was sent out in 1605, under Captain George Waymouth, who explored the coast of Maine, but the leading Catholics of England opposed the plan and no settlement was attempted. Had the project been carried out, New England from the beginning would have been Catholic, and the Puritans might never have been heard of on this side of the Atlantic.

DR. JOHN GILMARY SHEA, to whom we are indebted for this interesting fact, never tired while he lived in urging the purchase and preservation by some authoritative organization of every book and tract to be found relating to early Catholic settlements in America. He always pinned for a Cathedral Library in New York which might be a source of information and inspiration to the whole continent. Himself an assiduous collector he bequeathed the fact that many of these rare tracts were beyond his own slender purse. Rosier's "True Relation," which next to Sir George Peckham's "True Report," is the oldest book devoted to any English Catholic Settlement in this country, i.e., as he pointed out, of such excessive rarity as to have brought £800 at auction in England many years ago. Only a society with ample pecuniary resources could hope to garner nuggets like these. As to Dr. Shea his place as the premier historian of this continent is yet far from being generally recognized. Only historical scholars appraise him at his true worth.

READERS OF Browning will be glad to read this anecdote about him. The poet's son had on one occasion hired a room in a neighboring house in which to exhibit his pictures. In the temporary absence of the artist, Mr. Browning was doing the honors, the room being half-filled with fashionable friends. Mr. Browning was standing near the door, when a visitor, unannounced, made her appearance. The poet immediately proceeded to shake hands with the stranger, but was met with the ejaculation: "Oh, I beg your pardon, but please, sir, I'm the cook. Mr. Barrett asked me to come and see his pictures." "And I'm very glad to see you," said Browning, with ready courtesy, "Take my arm and I will show you round."

WHEN FITZ, the great Prime Minister, was dying he mentioned the name "Robert Ward," and made signs for pen and paper to be brought to him. This being done he wrote something which he signed with something like his well-known signature. The other wandering characters traced by the dying hand could not be deciphered. This precious paper was handed by the statesman's physician to Mr. Ward, but though the latter pored over it for hours together, time after time, he could make nothing of it. He was repeatedly heard to say that he would give all that he most valued in the world to be able to read the paper before him.

HERE is a recipe for cooking bladders which is said to have been a favorite with the Fleet Street literary group in the eighteenth century. "Take a bladder; lay it on a long and narrow dish; pour a quartern of whisky over it; set fire to the whisky. When it is burned out the fish will be done to a turn." The sensitive stomachs of this generation might not appreciate such an appetizing morsel. And in these days of Prohibition one would require to be in the millionaire class to be able to indulge.

MR. DEVLIN'S ADDRESS TO IRISH SOLDIERS

The Belfastmen recently returned to Ireland from service on European battlefields were tendered a reception in Belfast. The speaker of the occasion was Mr. Joseph Devlin, who paid fitting tribute to the Sixteenth Irish Division. Speaking of those who had made the supreme sacrifice, Mr. Devlin said:

"They died, not as cowards die, but as soldiers of freedom, with their faces toward the foe, and in the belief that their lifeblood was poured out in defense of liberty for the world. Unfortunately the close of the war brought to Ireland no peace and freedom, but strife and repression. Nevertheless, speaking broadly, and in spite of the unsettled state of the nations, I believe that the war has made the world safe for democracy, if democracy is but true to itself. No nation has done more, in proportion to her population and resources, than Ireland to win victory for the Allies. At least half a million men of Irish birth or blood served with the Allied forces amongst the elite of the fighting men of all nations. But none of them surpassed in valor or in achievement the men of the Sixteenth Division, the Belfast survivors of whom we have with us here tonight. No conscription was necessary to force them into the army. They were told by their great leader, Mr. John Redmond, that their war was Ireland's war, that it was a fight for Belgium and for small nationalities. They believed they were fighting, not alone for small nations and for humanity, but in a special degree for Ireland."

The speaker reminded his hearers that Ireland had fought her fight and kept her faith, "but faith has not been kept with her. It is intolerable that things should go in Ireland as they are now going. That such a system of government as operates today should stand in an outrage upon the principles for which men fought and died. Great and far-reaching as are the consequences to-day they will be infinitely more disastrous in the future if a prompt and satisfactory solution of the Irish problem is not forthcoming."

Mr. Devlin after quoting General Smuts on the proper way of facing the Irish demands scored British politicians for following a policy of militarism in their dealings with Ireland. Taking up the question of Ulster, the speaker continued: "Sir Edward Carson has said that all Ulster wants is to be let alone. Then the best thing for him to do is to let Ulster alone. If he did this, then our present difficulties could be easily settled, and men who have to live out their lives in Ulster would soon come together and realize that in the common task of securing a noble peace they would find the same spirit of union which inspired and moved them in the time of the war. The Curse of Ulster is that outsiders who are not Ulstermen are the chief cause of discussion and disunion amongst our people whose interests and aims are and ought to be identical."