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*Funeral oration on His Eminence
John Cardinal McCloskey, D.D., ...*

James Gibbons

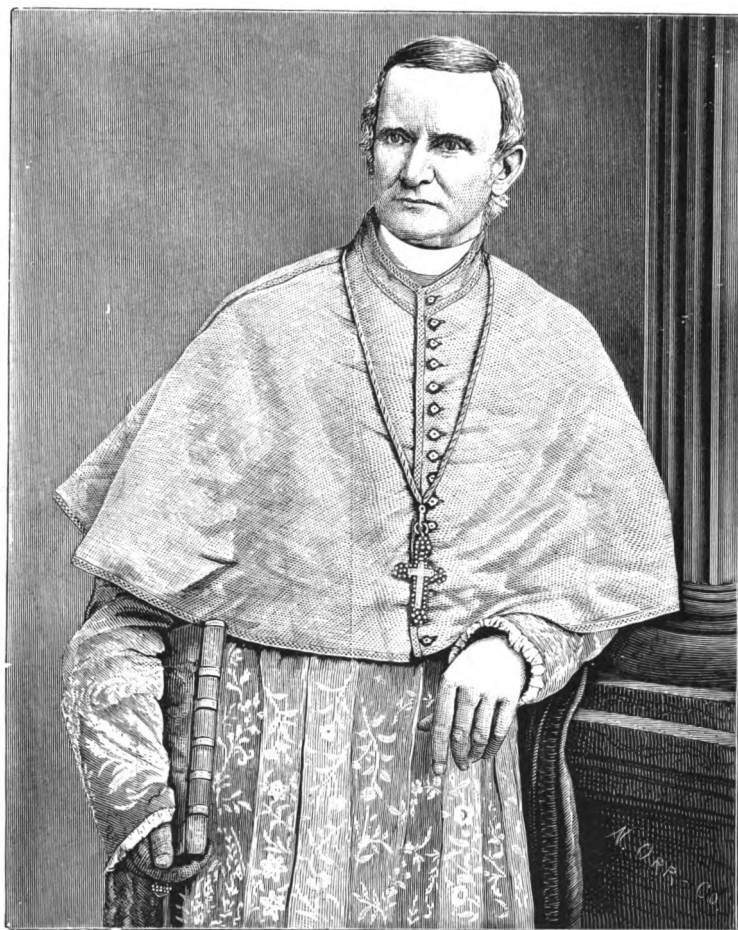
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1918



John Cardinal McCloskey

ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.

BORN IN BROOKLYN, N. Y., MARCH 10, 1810. ORDAINED JANUARY 12, 1834.
CONSECRATED BISHOP, MARCH 10, 1844. TRANSFERRED TO DIOCESE OF NEW
YORK, MAY 6, 1864. CREATED CARDINAL, JULY 15, 1875. DIED OCTOBER 10, 1886.

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FUNERAL ORATION

ON

HIS EMINENCE

JOHN CARDINAL McCLOSKEY, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.

Delivered October 15, 1885, at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York.

BY

MOST REV. JAMES GIBBONS, D.D.,

Archbishop of Baltimore.



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI AND ST. LOUIS:
BENZIGER BROTHERS,

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE.

1885.

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FUNERAL ORATION

ON

HIS EMINENCE

John Cardinal McCloskey, D. D.

ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.

ECCLŪS XLV.—“The Lord exalted Aaron. . . . He made an everlasting covenant with him, and gave him the priesthood of the nation, and made him blessed in glory. And he girded him about with a glorious girdle, and clothed him with a robe of glory, and crowned him with majestic attire . . . He chose him out of all men living to offer sacrifice to God . . . for a memorial to make reconciliation for his people. And he gave him power in his commandments in the covenants of his judgments that he should teach Jacob his testimonies, and give light to Israel in his law.”

Most Rev. and Right Rev. Fathers, Venerable Brethren of the Clergy and dear Brethren of the Laity :

These words, spoken originally of Aaron, may be fittingly applied to the great High Priest whose mortal remains now lie before you. For he also was chosen

out of all men living to fill the highest ecclesiastical position in this nation that he might teach Jacob his testimonies and give light to Israel in his law. The glorious ornaments of a Pontiff to which the sacred text refers, have a twofold signification ; they symbolize in the eyes of the people, his spiritual dignity and authority : to the Pontiff himself they represent the interior ornaments of virtue with which he should be adorned, and without which the most precious ornaments lose their lustre. In the expressive language of the Pontifical used on the occasion of the consecration of a Bishop, "*non honor commendat vestium sed splendor animarum.*"—It is not the glory of the vestments but the splendor of the soul that commends itself to Almighty God. These scarlet robes of the Cardinal remind you of the exalted dignity to which he was raised. They reminded himself of the garment of innocence worn by his divine Master and crimsoned with His precious Blood and that he should be ready, if necessary, to lay down his life for the faith.

It is sad to think that your beloved Cardinal shall never again resume these robes of office and shall never sit enthroned in this magnificent Cathedral erected by himself, in which he lovingly imparted to you his paternal benediction. His death has brought sorrow to the universal church as well as to the church of America and New York.

It has filled with grief the great heart of the Sovereign Pontiff and the college of Cardinals of which he was an illustrious member and a distinguished ornament.

It has fallen heavily upon you venerable Brethren of the clergy. You justly recognized in your Cardinal Archbishop a kind father, a devoted friend, a watchful shepherd, a fearless leader, and, above all, an impartial judge.

His death has stricken with sorrow you also, Brethren of the laity ; and the sadness depicted on your countenances, is the expression of the grief which fills your hearts.

Nor is this grief confined to those who are of the household of the faith. It extends to all classes and creeds of the community. The great heart of New York has mourned him as well becomes this empire city lamenting the death of one of its most illustrious and honored citizens. Neither wealth, nor power, nor rank could command such heartfelt and universal respect as has been spontaneously paid to the remains of your revered Prelate. He had won the hearts of the people.

The Christian Prelate is always a man of mark, a centre of observation to the eyes of the world. Like his divine Master, he "is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." Various opinions are formed of him. Some say, as was said of our Saviour, "he is a good man. Others say no, but that he seduceth the people." He is loved most by those who know him best. Hated or suspected he may be by those who are strangers to him and to his sacred character. Yet he has been too prominent a factor in the civilization and moral regeneration of mankind to be ever ignored or despised.

But to the eye of faith the Bishop is exalted above angels, because he exercises powers not given to angels. The Bishop is the ambassador of God appointed to vindicate His honor and proclaim His name among the nations of the earth. "For Christ," says the Apostle, "we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us." If it is esteemed a great privilege for a citizen to represent this great Republic in the courts of Europe, how much greater is the prerogative to represent the court of heaven among the nations of the world. "As the Father," says our Saviour, "hath sent me, I also send you. Going, therefore, teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." What a privilege to be the herald of God's law to the nations of the earth! "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace, of him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion, thy God shall reign!" How cherished a favor to be the bearer of the olive-branch of peace to a world deluged by sin; to be appointed by heaven to proclaim that Gospel which brings glory to God and peace to men, that Gospel which strengthens the weak, converts the sinner, reconciles enemies, comforts the afflicted, and holds out to all the hope of eternal life!

The life of the Cardinal has never been written and never can be. And this is true of every Catholic Prelate of America. He never can have his Boswell. The biographer may relate his public and official acts. He

may recount the churches he erected, the schools he opened, the institutions of charity and religion which he established ; the priests he ordained, the sermons he preached, the sacraments he administered, the laborious visitations he made. But he can know nothing of his private and inner life which is "hidden with Christ in God." That is manifest to God's recording angel only. The biographer knows nothing of the Bishop's secret and confidential relations with his clergy and people, and even with many who are alien to his faith. He is the daily depository of their cares and anxieties, of their troubles and afflictions, of their trials and temptations. They come to him for counsel in doubt, for spiritual and even temporal assistance. Were a Bishop's real life in its outward and inward fullness published, it would be more interesting than a novel. If this is true of the humblest prelate in the land, with how much greater force may it be applied to one occupying the eminent position of your beloved Cardinal.

How can I, then, my Brethren, with the few moments at my disposal, attempt even a brief sketch of the Cardinal's life? I can only skim over the surface, and touch upon a few salient features in his long and eventful career.

John McCloskey was born in the neighboring city of Brooklyn on the 10th day of March, A. D. 1810. That flourishing city, which now numbers 600,000 inhabitants, did not then contain 5,000 souls. Trained in the path of virtue and piety by his excellent Christian mother, he was sent, about the age of twelve years, to Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmittsburg, Md., where he graduated with the highest honors in 1828.

This venerable institution, which has been the nursery of so many distinguished bishops and priests of America, has been closely identified with the last four Ordinaries of the diocese of New York. After pursuing a course of theological studies at the Mountain, he was ordained by the venerable Bishop Dubois in 1834.

Soon after, young Father McCloskey repaired to Rome, where he devoted two years to more profound theological studies. So talented and industrious a priest must have derived peculiar benefit from the exceptional advantages afforded in the Eternal City. Another year he spent in visiting the principal countries of Europe. His contact with eminent men in the civil and ecclesiastical walks of life, and his habits of close observation, developed in him an intimate knowledge of mankind, which proved of incalculable advantage to him during his long administrative career.

On returning to his native country he was assigned to the pastoral charge of St. Joseph's Church in this city, where he remained a few years. But his great merits did not long escape the vigilant eye of Bishop Hughes. He was chosen as coadjutor to the Bishop and consecrated in 1844. When the diocese of Albany was created Dr. McCloskey was appointed its first Bishop, in 1847. Throughout the length and breadth of that extensive and flourishing portion of this Province can be traced the foot-prints of the devoted Prelate, and the Churches and institutions erected and founded during his administration bear testimony to his vigilance and apostolic zeal.

When the See of New York became vacant by the

death of Archbishop Hughes in 1863, the Rt. Rev. Dr. McCloskey was unanimously chosen to succeed him, and time has amply shown the wisdom of the choice. Catholic clergy and faithful of New York, what sentiments of honest pride must be evoked in your hearts at the bare mention of the names of these two illustrious pontiffs! They will compare favorably with the hierarchy of any See in Christendom, and they will shine forth as stars of the first magnitude in the glorious galaxy of deceased American Prelates. They will ever serve as shining lights to guide those who come after them in the paths of virtue and apostolic wisdom.

These two Prelates had each his predominant traits of character. McCloskey, meek, gentle, retiring from the world, reminds us of Moses with uplifted hands praying on the mountain. Hughes, active, bold, vigorous, aggressive, was, as it were, another Josue fighting in the valley, armed with the Christian panoply of faith, truth, and justice. The one recalls the Prince of the apostles blending authority with paternal kindness; the other reminds us of the Apostle of the Gentiles wielding the two-edged sword of the Spirit, the sword of the tongue and the pen.

In 1866 Archbishop McCloskey attended the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, of which he was a burning and a shining light. He was conspicuous alike for his eloquence in the pulpit and for his wisdom in the council-chamber. I well remember the discourse he delivered at the opening session. The clear, silvery tones of his voice, the grace of his gestures and manner, the persuasive eloquence and charm of his

words are indelibly imprinted on my memory and imagination. Just before ascending the pulpit, a telegram was handed to him, announcing the destruction by fire of his Cathedral. He did not betray the slightest emotion, notwithstanding the sudden and calamitous news. Next morning, I expressed to him my surprise at his imperturbable manner. "The damage," he replied, "is done, and I cannot undo it. We must calmly submit to the will of Providence."

This habit of self-control so characteristic of the man was not the stern, unfeeling composure of the stoic philosopher; it was not the cold apathy of the Mohamedan fatalist, it was the serene tranquillity of the Christian priest, acquired by long and serious meditation at the feet of Christ.

In the council-chamber his colleagues always listened with marked attention and respect to his words, and rarely, if ever, did any of them dissent from the views that he expressed.

In 1869 the Archbishop attended the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican, the most imposing Ecclesiastical assembly that has ever taken place since the Council of Trent. The bishops assembled from the various countries of Europe, North and South America, from Australia, from Africa, and from the islands of the Atlantic and the Pacific. They came from the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the cradle of the human family, and from the banks of the Jordan, the cradle of Christianity. They came from Mount Libanus and various parts of the Holy Land hallowed by the foot-prints of our Blessed Redeemer. Archbishop McCloskey was a conspicuous figure even in

this august assembly. He was deemed worthy of being made a member of the committee on discipline, one of the most important of the Council, and Cardinal Capalti, who presided over the committee, spoke in terms of the highest admiration of the wisdom of the Archbishop of New York.

But one crowning honor was reserved for your beloved Archbishop as a reward of conspicuous merit, and life-long services in the cause of God. Our late holy Father Pope Pius IX., in a consistory held in 1875, was pleased to create him Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. This was an honor unprecedented in the Western world, and rarely, if ever, was such a dignity conferred with stronger marks of public approbation. Not only in this great city and State of New York, but throughout the length and breadth of the land, the news of your Archbishop's elevation was hailed with the greatest manifestations of joy and satisfaction.

I shall not attempt to enumerate the Institutions of religion, charity, and learning which have sprung up in this populous diocese during the Cardinal's administration of one-and-twenty years. We may form some estimate of the development of Catholicity when we consider that the number of churches has increased during that period from seventy to one hundred and seventy, and the number of the clergy from one hundred and fifty to four hundred.

Your venerated Cardinal has left you at his death two great monuments of his zeal, and two great legacies of his love. The Catholic Protectory and this noble Cathedral, the grandest in the United

States, will stand as lasting monuments of his zeal for religion and humanity.

He has left you two precious legacies of his love, and first, the legacy of a pure and unsullied life, as Priest, Bishop, Archbishop, and Cardinal. He never tarnished the surplice of the Priest nor the rochet of the Bishop, nor the pallium of the Archbishop nor the scarlet robes of the Cardinal. After spending upwards of half a century in the exercise of the ministry, he goes down to his honored grave without a stain upon his moral character.

He leaves you another precious legacy in the person of his gifted successor. When Moses died, says the sacred Scripture, the people mourned for him thirty days. And Josue, his successor, was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel obeyed Josue as Moses had commanded them. The dying Cardinal laid his hands in benediction on his successor, and that benediction of the expiring Patriarch will be as fruitful to the son of his adoption and the heir of his priestly throne as was Jacob's blessing to Joseph. And if he could speak from this bier, he would say to you all: "As you loved, and served, and obeyed me, so will you love, and serve, and obey him. I regard as done for me what you do for him. I will live for you in him, and thus your father who was lost is found, having been dead he is come to life again."

Oh, beloved Pontiff! may thy soul be this day in Paradise! We cherish thy memory; and even in the years to come, when thy life shall be viewed

through the mellowing atmosphere of time, thy memory, like the memory of Josias, will be as the composition of a sweet odor made by the art of the perfumer ; thy memory shall be sweet as honey in every mouth, and as delicious music at a banquet. They will speak of thee as the kind, and gentle, and fatherly Cardinal McCloskey !





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