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Fathers of all ages and countries teach

alike the same doctrine, as happens in the present case, it is not a private error but the truth as believed by the universal Church, and we have therefore the answer to the Review's question: "Why prayers for the dead?"

It is evident that the admissions of the Review come from the fact that new light and study have forced modern Protestant divines to the conviction, much against their will, that the doctrines of the Catholic Church are not the modern innovations which their predecessors claimed them to be. Peter Martyr denied that the Primitive Church practiced praying for the dead. Calvin, however, admitted that it was a common practice about one thousand three hundred years before his time; but, he says, it was an error.

If this were the case, the Church universally fell into a grievous error soon after the time of the Apostles, and there was no one to resist its introduction except Aetius, who is acknowledged by Calvin and other Protestants, as well as by Catholics, to have been a heresiarch. The notion is so absurd that it needs only to be stated clearly to be scouted by every reflecting mind.

The writer in the Review calls for Scriptural authority for the practice of praying for the dead, and there is ample Scriptural authority for it, but it must be borne in mind that he has no right to call for Scriptural authority when it is proved that it is authorized by the Church, which St. Paul describes as the "Pillar and Ground of Truth." (1 Tim. III, 15.) Nowhere in Holy Scripture is it asserted that there must be found a text of Scripture to confirm a doctrine which is clearly handed down from the Apostles, and is sustained by the authority of the Church. On the contrary, St. Paul commands in 2 Thess. II, 14: "Therefore brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle." The teaching of the Apostles by word is, therefore, of the same authority as if they had recorded it in the Scriptures, which have come down to us from them. We will, however, for the satisfaction of our readers, show in a future issue the force of Scriptural argument by which may be proved the two cognate doctrines of purgatory and prayers for the dead.

As St. Augustine has been mentioned by our contemporary as having derived his belief in prayers for the dead from his early heathenism, we will conclude this article by quoting that illustrious and learned Doctor of the Church to show that he derived it, not from heathenism, but from the positive teaching of the Church:

"In the book of Maccabees we read that sacrifice was offered for the dead; but even if nowhere in the ancient Scriptures were this read, the authority of the universal Church, which is clear in regard to this usage, would be of no small weight, whereas among the prayers which the priest offers up to the Lord God at His altar, there is found a commendation of the dead." (St. Aug. book on "Care for the Dead.")

There are other passages of similar import in his writings, all of which prove that the authority of the Church on this point is most decisive.

It will be noticed that St. Augustine asserts not only: 1, that prayers are to be offered for the dead; but, 2, that the book of Maccabees, which authorizes them, is Holy Scripture; 3, that the authority of the Church on this point is sufficient justification for this or any other usage; 4, that the whole Church practiced it; 5, that it is found in the liturgy; 6, that sacrifice is offered up under the New Law for this purpose just as it was under the Old Law. This, of course, refers to the Sacrifice of the Mass. A more complete proof of the identity of the Catholic Church of today with the Church of St. Augustine could scarcely be looked for.

A FINE EXHIBIT.

It is the intention of the Catholics of the West to make a thoroughly American exhibit of Catholic educational work at the World's Fair, which will be held in Chicago in 1892. Ample space has been promised by the directors for a complete exhibit, and a committee is being formed to carry out the project with the assistance of Catholic educationists throughout the union.

In reference to this exhibit, some fanatical journals, which are constantly foremost in misrepresenting everything which Catholics do, have made insulting comments. Among these the Methodist Advocate of Detroit "wonders" if the Catholics will "exhibit all the schemes undertaken for the destruction of the Public schools."

Our lively contemporary, the Michigan Catholic, answers the Advocate well and concludes its answer thus:

"But we will exhibit the work of the Catholic Church in the United States in education, independent of the patronage of the State and without one dollar of public money. We will exhibit the sacrifices made by the Catholics of the United States to support schools from which God is not banished, and in which children are taught to know God and love Him and serve Him. And all who will see this exhibit will be aware that the Catholic schools are supported wholly by Catholics, besides paying the school taxes by which the children of Methodists D.D.'s are educated."

THE ISSUE IN WISCONSIN.

The lesson taught by the Wisconsin elections which have just terminated is one which has its moral to the people of Ontario as well as to those of the United States. While in other States, undoubtedly, the issue turned upon the question of the tariff chiefly, in Wisconsin it turned upon freedom of education, and the party of Free Educationists gained a most complete and glorious triumph.

Much has been done to make it appear both in the United States and Canada that the Catholics of that State as well as throughout the United States are opposed to the Public schools, and we all know how similar representations have been constantly made in Canada. It has also been represented that another issue was at stake in the Wisconsin contest, namely, the right of the English language to be deemed the principal language of instruction.

Both of these statements are utterly unfounded. As regards the first, there was no question whatsoever of an attack on the Public schools. As far as Catholics were concerned, it was a question solely of defending the parochial Catholic schools from the violent assaults which were made upon them for years, and which at the present time were of such a nature as to threaten their very existence.

The Republicans by coercive legislation wished to subject private schools, which are not subsidized by the State, to a species of inspection by hostile school commissioners, whereby the latter would be enabled to close the schools at will, and there is evidence enough from the conduct of such commissioners in other States that they would use their unlimited powers arbitrarily. It was plainly a question of parental rights to educate their children according to their own conscientious convictions. The Catholics maintained that their schools gave sufficient education to satisfy all that the State had a right to require, and that unless the State subsidized the schools, it had no right to interfere with their operation at all, much less to subject them to the whims of hostile school corporations. As citizens they had a right to go to the polls on such an issue. They did so, and they have been rewarded by the victory which has perched upon their banners.

No truly liberal Protestant would say that a local School Board, which has often a narrow minded and bigoted majority of members, should have it in their power to decide whether or not a certain Parochial school is a lawful one in the sense in which the Bannet law was to be interpreted, and it was an outrage upon conscience and liberty to pass such a law—a law which, besides, authorized the prosecution of Catholics who would sustain such schools. It was an outrage which even the most extreme fanatics in Ontario never dreamed of inflicting, and we are surprised to find that some Canadian journals, from which more liberality would be expected, declare that the Republicans were maintaining the true cause of education in the stand they took for the obnoxious law.

But the victory was not won by Catholics alone. Wisconsin is, of course, mostly a Protestant State, and the Catholics alone could never have gained their cause. The German Lutherans were equally aggrieved, and they as well as other Protestants joined their Catholic brethren in battling for religious liberty.

The Lutherans had in view a purpose somewhat different from that of the Catholics. It is their wish to preserve the German language, and they too felt that power over their schools should not be placed in the hands of persons not qualified to pass judgment upon them. But in all the Catholic schools, whether German or English be the predominant language, English is taught, and an effort is being made in every case to make English the language of the school as soon as possible. With the Catholics, therefore, it was not at all a question of language.

In Milwaukee diocese alone there are reported for last year 125 Catholic schools, with an attendance of 20,000 children, and in all English is taught. In the other two dioceses of the State there are 128 schools with 16,000 children in attendance, and a similar report of efficiency in English comes from them.

Mr. Peck, the successful candidate for the Governorship, was elected by a majority of 30,000. He is supported by a Legislature pledged to repeal the Bannet Law, and it will undoubtedly be wiped off the statute book at the next Legislative session.

It has been discovered that there is in Minneapolis a secret sworn society the object of which is to prevent Catholics from acquiring political power. They are sworn to do their utmost to ostracize and abolish the Catholic religion from the country, as Catholics are the enemies of the Republic. These people forget that Catholics constituted two-fifths of the army of the Republic during the civil war. Of course only the real enemies of the United States will join this association, which is very like the Orangemen of Canada, and which is very largely composed of quondam Orangemen. True Americans will not join it.

BIRCHALL'S DOOM.

Public opinion, both in Canada and England, has ratified the verdict of the jury and the sentence pronounced by Judge McMahon on the unfortunate end, to all appearance, impotent Englishman who was executed in the jail yard of Woodstock on the 14th instant. No person witnessed the horrid crime of the murder of F. C. Benwell, which was perpetrated on the 17th February, in the swamp near Princeton; but a chala of circumstantial evidence, without one missing link, was so wound round the unfortunate Birchall that it was utterly impossible for any body of rational men, sworn to pronounce on the evidence of facts adduced, to hesitate in bringing in the verdict that decided his fate. That Canadian law has been vindicated and justice done in the premises—that a foul and mysterious murder has been unearthed and brought home to the guilty party—and that, so far as human legislation can provide against a repetition of a crime so atrocious, society is for the time being safe-guarded by an adequate deterrent in the infliction of capital punishment on the offender—there is every reason for self-congratulation on the part of the Canadian people and their executive ministers of State. The condign punishment meted out in the regular course of justice to a condemned criminal has been a source of relief to a numerous class of English people who fancied that Canadian law is more or less influenced by the tardy and sometimes abortive measures of justice adopted in the neighboring Republic. All, both in this country and in England, must experience a sense of relief and satisfaction that an end has come to the excitement and morbid curiosity awakened by the details of Birchall's trial, of his erratic life, as told by himself and by others, and of his final departure from the scene by a public execution.

Had the poor, misguided wretch, whose guilt, whether wrongly or rightly, is so firmly established in the minds of all, without exception, acknowledged his crime—had he confessed to what a bare or participation he had in the awful tragedy of Benwell's mysterious death—the relief to society in general would be still more marked and more deeply felt. But confession there was none; nor did the infatuated Birchall condescend to throw any light upon facts so shrouded in mystery to all but to himself and his God.

His feelings for the honor of his aged mother, who survives him, and for his reverend brother and other respected relatives in England, may have deterred him from making an open confession of so great and so hideous an act of villainy. Possibly a false sense of shame and dishonor may have prevailed in preventing him from the acknowledgment of so cowardly and base a piece of treachery as the shooting from behind of a harmless and unsuspecting companion entrusted by a fond father to his protection and safe keeping.

But no matter what the cost to his feelings or to his honor—if any remained—society is so constituted, in God's providence, and humanity is so fashioned by the will of its Creator, that confession must be made or crime must remain unpardoned and wholly unexpiated. Probably the unhealthy surroundings in which his boyhood was spent—the loose discipline of his college life, as told in his autobiography—and the, to all appearance, godless colleges in which he received a liberal training, without moral restraint of any kind, should be held accountable more than his own perverse nature for such fatal and deplorable results. It must be admitted that in his previous life the necessity of confession was never once intimated to him. The education imparted in English Protestant colleges is totally averse to confession of sin. Such belief and practices are considered as part of the Romish system, and not worthy of consideration, but to be condemned and discarded by all true-born Britons. Why then cast blame on poor Birchall for adhering to principles instilled into his untutored and inexperienced mind? He was but twenty-four years old when the gallows claimed him. Had he been accustomed from childhood to self-examination and confession of sin, he would not have felt that repugnance to open acknowledgment of his wicked deeds, which the public expected and demanded from him in his last moments. He would have confessed, he would have experienced a charge of heart, tears of repentance would have started unbidden to his eyes and melted to compassion those stony gazers who witnessed unmoved his last act on earth. The Rev. Canon Wade, who spent the previous night with him in his cell, and had been a constant visitor with him since the sentence of death was pronounced, could not even so far prevail on Birchall as to induce him to say, "The Lord have mercy on my soul," or "Pray for me, dear friends." We once witnessed an execution in Ireland. The doomed man said: "I call God and His angels to witness that I had neither hand, nor part in the crime for which

I am about to die (It was a case of false identity), and I forgive my accusers. Although not guilty of murder, I committed many other sins in my youthful days for which I am now repentant and am willing to expiate by this unmerited death on the scaffold. Pray for me, all of you, and may God have mercy on my soul." The immense crowd, two or three thousand people, for it was a public execution, went down on their knees and prayed aloud and fervently, while the victim of pre-judiced and perverted justice was being ushered into the presence of his Maker. But Birchall's education led to a different and more regrettable ending.

DID BIRCHALL CONFESS HIS GUILT?

"The conduct of the Rev. Rural Dean Wade in connection with the burial of Birchall's body, points in the strongest way that the clergyman has a knowledge of the guilt of the deceased. After the execution on Friday morning, he saw in the papers that Birchall had written a statement on the 10th inst. in which he declared solemnly that he never confessed in any manner whatsoever any complicity in the murder of Benwell. This was so untrue that the whole attitude of the Rural Dean was altered by its reading. He said to friends with whom he discussed the matter that the written statement of Birchall on the 10th was a lie. He is reported to have made a reference to men who die with a lie on their lips. All his hope in the confession of the murderer was destroyed. The seeming repentance that had given him so much gratification and joy appeared hollow after that last statement. The Rural Dean was pained to the heart, but he determined on a course of procedure in connection with the burial service that has been dictated by his conscience but which to the dead murderer's relatives and friends is exceedingly distressing. He determined that he could not read over the body of him to whom he had ministered so hopefully and tirelessly, the burial service of his Church. At the hanging he had read the service, but he would not give the body the rites of the Church. The reason for this change in his opinion he freely acknowledged was because of Birchall's denial of having made any confession. The only logical sequence of this is to say that Birchall has confessed to the Rural Dean some complicity at least in the crime. The Mr. Wade acknowledged by saying that he has known about the crime from the beginning."

The above extract appeared in the Free Press of Monday last, and has been going the rounds of the press generally without contradiction. What opinion must the public form of Rev. Canon Wade's discretion or honor as a clergyman? If the unfortunate Birchall in a moment of repentance moved to confession of his sin, and if he confided to his pastor, as God's representative, secrets that he would not reveal without revulsion and horror to the outside world, it was, no doubt, on the supposition that those secrets should be kept sacredly guarded and forever locked up in the bosom of him to whom they were religiously confided. By no outward action on the part of the confessor should the secrets revealed to him be given to the public, or, which is the same, hinted at in such a manner as to leave no doubt on people's minds but that a confession of guilt was made. But Mr. Wade acknowledges that his action at the grave, and his refusal to read the burial service, were determined by the confession made to him in the privacy and confidence of his official character, and that he knew about the crime from the beginning. Mr. Wade does not pretend to say that he obtained such knowledge through other means than the confessional. No wonder Protestants should feel a shudder creep over them when confession is proposed to them as a means of obtaining pardon for sin. If Canon Wade's conduct and language be a criterion of the discretion and prudential silence to be expected from Protestant pastors, their flocks can be easily excused from that confidential acknowledgment of guilt which is the surest sign of repentance and the only way open to forgiveness.

Leaving theology and controversy out of the question, it is certain that if Birchall had confessed and asked the prayers of those who stood around the scaffold—had he showed signs of repentance and sought mercy from God through the Redeemer—public sympathy would have been extended to him in his final hours, and public opinion would have condoned him in accepting the death penalty as his just desert. But he was not so educated, and certainly Canon Wade's indiscreet action is no encouragement to ordinary sinners or to future criminals to open their hearts to admission of sin or to seek pardon and peace in the heavenly remedy prescribed by the Apostle:

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (Ep. St. John, I, 9)

John Boyle O'Reilly's monument in Holyhood Cemetery is an immense granite boulder, under which is placed a modest tomb of New Hampshire slate. The New York World states that there are more than five hundred regular attendants at week-day Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in that city every morning.

MR. BALFOUR AND THE IRISH FAMINE.

The trip of Mr. Arthur Balfour through Ireland has been productive of this much good at least, that it has awakened him and his government to the fact that the danger of famine is imminent to the country unless immediate steps be taken to avert it, and he has pledged himself and the government that these steps shall be taken. It is true that very little reliance can be placed on his promises; yet in the teeth of the world, in the teeth of British public opinion, which, for the first time in the history of the empire, has been brought to bear upon the actual condition of Ireland, it will be hard for him to break the pledges he has so solemnly given this time.

American public opinion has also been strongly brought to bear upon the subject. No sooner was it definitely announced that the crop upon which the people depend for sustenance will be a failure than the sympathies of the people of America were aroused. Committees were appointed throughout the country and collections were taken up in order to afford relief in this dire distress.

The Government, in the meantime, threw all the discredit it could on the facts, and actually, through Mr. Balfour, declared in Parliament that they were greatly exaggerated, and that there was no danger of famine. The same refrain was taken up by the Tory press, the Times, of course, leading. That portion of the press in this country which is always inimical to Ireland re-echoed the same statements, quoting the Times as their chief authority—the Times so notorious for its unscrupulousness.

In 1848 the Times actually gloated over the impending destruction of the Irish race, or at least the destruction of a large proportion thereof, through famine and fever, and the dispersion of the rest, and the phobism so exultingly uttered at that time—"The Irish are going—going with a vengeance"—is not forgotten by Irishmen to this day, nor by the rest of the world. The Times is to day controlled by kindred spirits with those who managed it in 1848, and the people of America who have ever sympathized with Ireland in her distress paid no attention to the assurances of the Times that there is no danger now. Hence no sooner was it made known through other sources than the Times that the poor people of Ireland are in danger, than offers of assistance were at once made. This is what has chiefly stirred the Salisbury Government, through very shame, to make the present promises of relief.

The Government have, as yet, taken no measures for the purpose of meeting the crisis. Will they do so? We have already said that it is very doubtful, how ever they have promised, and that is the first step, at all events, towards performance. Mr. Balfour states that public works will at once be started in the distressed districts to enable the people to earn a livelihood independently of their bad potato crop. This will assuredly, if carried out, afford at least partial relief.

In consequence of these promises the American Committee in New York for the relief of famine have withdrawn their appeal to America for assistance. It is not their intention that the Committee should dissolve, but they recognize that the first duty lies on the Government to save its own subjects. What is a Government for? Of what earthly use is it, if, in the moment of need, it throws upon foreigners of good will the burden of saving its subjects from a dreadful evil which is foreseen, and which it has the power to avert?

It is precisely that in 1847 and 1848 the famine was foreseen, and that no steps were taken towards its prevention which constitutes one of the most damning arrangements of British Government in Ireland in the eyes of the civilized world. At that time, even, there was plenty of food in Ireland itself, grown on the soil, to feed double the population of the country. What would a paternal Government have done under such circumstances? The action of Louis Napoleon in France when a dearth, which would not nearly be so bad as a general famine, was feared, is an answer to this question. Exports of food were stopped. The food was in the country, and it must be eaten in the country. Thus there was food enough for every one. But when Ireland was threatened, millionaire landlords in England must be pampered on the labor of starving Irishmen, and for their benefit, the food was sold in England and in foreign markets, and they pocketed the proceeds, while the people starved or left their country by millions to find elsewhere something to eat.

That dreadful time is still within the memory of many of our own Canadian people, when thousands of fever-stricken families were suddenly landed at every port in America fleeing from the dreadful scourge—or rather bringing the scourge with them. And it was at such a time of disaster that the Times triumphantly said "The Irish are going with a vengeance." These words were true, even in a sense which that always anti-Irish journal did not intend. It is wonderful that when by persistent woe they were so driven away they went with a determination to inflict vengeance upon their oppressor at the first opportunity? It is a wonder that the Irish of the United States, many of them the immigrants of those years, and very many of them their children, should still retain the vengeance with which they came to the country?

We should be just. We cannot deeply blame the Irish of the United States if they retain the remembrance of those sad days, and if they cast their influence into the scale in favor of a hostile attitude towards the country which still oppresses them in the past, and which still treats the Irish as a people to be downtrodden and not as one which should be governed as other nations, to lead them to plenty and prosperity.

Let us hope that the time is at hand when there will be a change for the better. Should Mr. Balfour make the promise he has promised to the people, and if it is a sign that better times are near at hand, meanwhile, the American Committee will continue its organization, in order that should he forget his promises, they may not be far off when Ireland will need their help.