

Northwest Review

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SATURDAY, JAN 10, 1903.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT WEEK.

JANUARY.

- 11—Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany and First Sunday after the Epiphany.
- 12, Monday—Office of the Sixth Day in the Octave of the Epiphany.
- 13, Tuesday—Octave of the Epiphany.
- 14, Wednesday—St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers.
- 15, Thursday—St. Paul, the first hermit.
- 16, Friday—St. Marcellus I., Pope, Martyr.
- 17, Saturday—St. Antony, Abbot.

A SLANDER FINALLY AND COMPLETELY REFUTED.

It will be remembered that, in our issue of December 6th last, we commented editorially on the Morning Telegram's offensive heading to a despatch announcing that Ross, a North Dakota murderer, had owned that he had committed a second murder. We showed in our article how the despatch plainly indicated that the confession to the priest had nothing to do with the publication of the crime, which was made public by the sheriff. Hence we inferred rightly that the Telegram, in editing the despatch, had been unnecessarily offensive to Catholics, for its heading read, "Confession to priest led to finding man's body in a well," and the animus thus shown was intensified in the following item from the same paper's column. The News in Brief: "As a result of the confession to a priest of a condemned murderer, two men named Hanson were arrested at Williston, N.D., for murder."

Our editor-in-chief wrote a strong letter of protest to the editor of the Morning Telegram, and this letter appeared in that paper's issue of November 29. Father Cherrier also wrote to His Lordship the Bishop of Fargo, who immediately replied. Extracts from Bishop Shanley's letter were published in our issue of December 13th. He kindly enclosed a long clipping from the Bottineau Courant (which we also reprinted), pointing out that this paper, published in the town where Ross made his avowal, makes no mention of the priest. This negative testimony was so conclusive that Bishop Shanley refrained from writing to the parish priest of Bottineau about it, being quite sure that he would never have been guilty of so enormous a sacerdotal crime as the betrayal of a confessional secret.

This would have sufficed to satisfy any fair-minded person that it was not "confession to a priest" that "led to finding a man's body in a well." But now, thanks to Bishop Shanley's truly episcopal solicitude, we have the explicit testimony of the murderer himself that the priest had nothing to do with the disclosure of the second murder. His Lordship of Fargo sent to this office a little before Christmas a second clipping from the Bottineau Courant, of December 19th, which settles the case once for all. We must apologize to

Bishop Shanley for having so long delayed the publication of his most valuable contribution, and we feel sure he will condone the delay occasioned by the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The Bottineau Courant begins by saying that, "upon the application of States Attorney Johnson of Ward county, the board of pardons took action in the case of William Ross at their meeting on the 10th inst., granting a stay of execution until March 6th. The board stated that inasmuch as William Ross had confessed to complicity in a murder in Ward county for which Carl Hanson will be tried for his life, and as Ross is the only living witness who can testify in regard thereto, they would grant a reprieve until the 6th day of March, at which time he shall be hanged. Hanson's trial will take place in January and Ross will be taken over to Minot to give evidence."

This is followed by a half-tone portrait of William (not Ballie, as first reported) Ross, which shows a fairly good-looking young face with a straightforward, though somewhat devil-may-care, expression, and a weak mouth, which may account for his having been, as appears from his own confession, published in our issue of December 13, accessory after the fact to the murder of Lemay.

A reporter of the Bottineau Courant visited Ross in his cell. The prisoner did not talk readily and was a little reticent about discussing his troubles with a stranger, but after a preliminary talk he made the following statements in answer to questions put to him:—

"Yes, since they have given me more time I sometimes think maybe I will get a life sentence instead of being hung. I am prepared for the worst, and will make the best of my fate whatever happens.

"O, yes. I suppose I deserve hanging, but for the sake of my relatives—my wife and family—I wish my sentence could be commuted. I have a wife and four children. It is hard on them.

"Yes, I have joined the Catholic Church. FATHER TURCOTTE IS A FINE MAN, AND HE HAS HELPED ME A LOT. HE DID NOT TELL THEM ABOUT THE LEMAY BUSINESS. I TOLD THAT AND WAS GOING TO TELL IT ANYWAY. When I was away from my family I got thinking about his wife and I wanted her to know what had happened to him.

"It was Hanson who fired the shots that killed Lemay. I never had the gun in my hands."

The rest of the interview is not relevant to our view of the case. The words we have printed in capitals set the matter at rest for ever. From the condemned man's own testimony Father Turcotte, the only Catholic priest there, had nothing to do with the disclosure of any murder.

It will now be in order for the Morning Telegram to withdraw its double charge that "Confession to a priest led to finding man's body in a well," and that "As a result of the confession to a priest of a condemned murderer, two men named Hanson were arrested at Williston, N.D., for murder."

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND LICENSE TO SIN.

Catholic Standard and Times.

One is often tempted to ask whether the average Protestant is really complete in his mental equipment, or incurably defective in some department of its machinery, when he attempts to grapple with the tenets of Catholic faith. On some points many excellent men seem to be utterly incapable of getting a glimmering of the true state of the case, as understood by the Catholic, or else—a conclusion not to be easily entertained—wholly dishonest in statement. There are, no doubt, such a class of controversialists, but a minority. The average Protestant will not wrong his neighbor by imputing to him what he does not really hold as articles of faith. On one subject especially an insuperable difficulty seems always to present itself to such honest souls. Forgiveness of sins and the relation thereto of Indulgences, when ap-

proached by most non-Catholic controversialists, seem to be encompassed by as many mists and fogs as the shores of Newfoundland in November.

That an Indulgence is a formal license to commit sin—for a valuable consideration—is the steadfast and unshakable belief of many excellent Protestants. That sins may be forgiven by God without any form of penance is also part of the same inexplicable misconception. So long as a human being believes in the Redeemer, it makes no matter how often or how grievously the sin cry to heaven is part of the same woful delusion, begotten of the monstrous doctrine of justification by mere faith.

To the decree of Christ, "Go and sin no more," the rebel monk opposed the advice, "Sin, and sin stoutly," that the "justification" might be all the more complete and efficacious.

Last week the two zealous missionaries, Father Xavier Sutton and Father Valentine, brought to a close eminently successful missions in different parts of Maryland where there is a large non-Catholic population. Hot foot after them started out some alarmed preachers, fearful lest the truths of Catholicism expounded by the two priests should leave too deep an impression. Among those who were most active in this counter-mission was the Rev. Dr. Grise, who presently belongs to the Methodist camp. He spoke at Easton, Maryland, last Sunday, taking for theme the question, "Can Man Forgive Sin?" Incidentally he brought on the controversy between Tetzel and Luther. There is no figure in history about whom so much apocrypha has been written and spoken as the Dominican, John Tetzel. It would be too much to expect that some of this fiction would not be made to serve the purpose of such a controversialist as the Rev. Mr. Grise, who has long been noted for the childlike simplicity of faith in which he accepts all things that appear to cast discredit on the Catholic system as well as the myopia with which he is afflicted with regard to what redounds to its glory. One of the fables most relished by this class of controversialists is a speech on Indulgences said to have been delivered in public by Tetzel, because it contains the following grotesque passages:—

"Indulgences are the most precious and sublime gifts to God. This cross (pointing to a red wood cross which hung before him) has as much efficacy as the cross of Christ itself. Come and I will give you letters, furnished with seals, by which even the sins you may have a wish to commit hereafter shall be forgiven you. I would not exchange my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle by his discourses. There is no sin so great that an indulgence cannot remit it. Repentance is not necessary. But more than this, indulgences not only save the living, they save the dead also. Priest, noble, merchant, woman, young woman, young man, harken to your parents and your friends who are dead, and who cry from the depths of the abyss, 'we are enduring horrible tortures; a small alms will deliver us; you can give it and you will not.' The very instant your piece of money clicks at the bottom of this strong box the soul is freed from Purgatory and flies to heaven."

It is evidently on the strength of this spurious speech that the charge of license to commit sin being conveyed by an Indulgence is advanced. No one believes that Tetzel used such language. The language he did use, as generally believed, is given in a new life of him by an eminent German scholar, Dr. Paulus. We take the translation from an admirable review and sketch in the present month's "Messenger," from the pen of Rev. J. Corbett, S. J.:

"Hear ye not the voices of your parents and the other souls calling out: 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me? We are suffering the most dreadful pains and tortures, from which you can release us by a little alms * * * you can deliver us so easily, and you will not.'"

Father Corbett thus states the case for Tetzel, while observing that many of his fellow-priests believed he was not stating the Catholic doctrine accurately:

"In the official instructions, and in Tetzel's writings, true sorrow for sins is given as an absolutely essential condition for gaining the indulgence. In proof that this doctrine was so understood by the people, we may refer to the fact that during the jubilee at Munich in 1480, 270 confessors had to be appointed 'on account of the crowds of people.' In 1489, at Nurnberg, forty-three confessors 'heard confessions daily in the church, while the jubilee lasted, that is, from Michaelmas to St. Martin's day.' At the same time, there were certainly some who misunderstood the nature of this indulgence, but it by no means follows that the misunderstanding was due to any false teachings in the pulpit. Perhaps the preachers were not careful enough in instructing the people, but there is nothing to show that Tetzel was to blame in this way. From his writings it is certain that his doctrine on the subject was perfectly correct. The charge that he taught the remission of future sins by means of the indulgence is absolutely unwarranted. It was first made by Luther in 1541, and has been repeated ever since by men, who do not dream of assigning any reason for Luther's long silence about such an outrageous doctrine, or of seeking to reconcile the statement with Tetzel's teaching that no indulgence could be gained without contrition. How can a man have sorrow for a sin not yet committed, or for sins that he intends to commit later?"

Concerning the power of man to forgive sins, it need only be said that the use of the word "man" in the case, by itself, is a piece of casuistry. When man acts as the agent of God, namely, as a priest of God, he, by Divine authority, is clothed with power to bind and loose, to forgive sins or to retain sins, as appointed by our Lord. The authority is found in the Protestant Bible. In the bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" on Peter, the structure of penance and forgiveness after confession was formally erected. There is no truth more evident in the whole body of Christian teaching. Not all the Methodist preachers that ever held forth can reason this fact away.

DON'T PUT A SAINT IN SUCH COMPANY.

The "Sacred Heart Review" suggests that the name of Mrs. Seton (foundress of the order of Sisters of Charity) be chosen as one of those to be perpetuated in the Hall of Fame in the New York University. Four other names are also in nomination, viz., those of Charlotte Cushman, the actress; Mary Lyon, teacher; Lucretia Mott and Dorothy Dix, philanthropists. We would opine that if those judges on whom the selection of names devolves can find no higher ideals than those embodied in the lives here recalled, it were better to have the Catholic ideal omitted from the scroll. The stage, the school, the social academy are all noble things essentially, but not one of them aims at anything not contemplated in the system of Comte. The Catholic Church is in itself a Hall of Fame which has no equal. If its noble American sons and daughters are to be recognized in national memorials merely because of their civic or philanthropic deserts, Catholics can afford to wait for an era when a truer appraisal may be possible.—Catholic Standard-Times.

NONE TO SHOW.

In a London West End church on a recent Sunday the janitor curate was preaching on reasons for coming to church. Some people, he remarked, come to church for no better reason than to show off their best clothes. Then he glanced thoughtfully over his audience. "I am thankful to see, dear friends," he added, "that none of you have come here for that reason."

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