

The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY

The True Witness Printing & Publishing Co.,
(LIMITED)

At No. 761 Craig St., Montreal, Canada.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

City \$1.50
Country..... 1.00
If not paid in advance, \$1.50 (Country)
and \$2 (City) will be charged.
Subscribers, Newfoundland, \$1.50 a
year in advance.

All business communications to be
addressed to

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Managing Director,
THE TRUE WITNESS P. & P. Co.



MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 1894.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

Numerous are the articles we have dedicated to the consideration of this important subject; but in looking over them all we feel how very weak we were, and how far from being able to do justice to such a vital question of our faith, when in presence of the admirable evidence of the validity of penance adduced by that learned and eminent prelate, Bishop Maes, of Covington. To reproduce his whole article would not be possible this week, but we will take from it some of the principal features—it is too good to allow it to pass unnoticed. He first tells us what the teaching of the Church is on the subject of penance as a sacrament. It is unnecessary to repeat any of that portion of the article, since all our readers know perfectly well what the doctrine is.

All Christians admit that Christ came on earth to redeem man and release the human soul from sin. Not only original sin—but all sin. We find Jesus performing the act of divine mercy in the case of Mary Magdalene—Luke viii. 48, and of the palsied man, Matth. ix. 2; Mark ii. 6. But as Christ's mission was completed on the day of the Resurrection, and He was to return to His Father He left His duly authorized agents behind Him to carry on and perpetuate the same work. We will not stop to consider the texts whereby He empowered St. Peter, the Apostles and their successors to "forgive sins."

In the old law the Almighty employed human agencies to carry out His designs; so does Christ do in the new law. He did not pardon Saul of Tarsus when he was smitten on the way to Damascus; He sent him to the priest Ananias, who baptized him and thus freed him from sin. (Acts Apost. ix. 17-18.) When St. Paul became a priest he says: "God hath reconciled me to Himself through Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. v. 18.) Then are not the words of the gospels sufficient? "Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, &c." (Matth. xviii. 18.) And again "Peace be with you. As the Father sent Me, I also send you, &c." (John xx. 21-23.) The power of forgiving sins implies confession. We read in the New Testament: "Many of them who believed came confessing and declaring their deed,"—Acts xiv. 18, viz., to the Apostles. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (John i. 9.)

Here it seems to us that there is

sufficient evidence to show how reasonable and how true is the dogma that the Catholic Church teaches and practises. But Bishop Maes does not confine himself to mere text of scripture, he invokes the testimony of the Fathers—testimony that our non-Catholic friends admit or reject according as it affects their case. We will now give our readers the exact words of the few out of hundreds of authorities quoted.

The Bishop says, that for the sake of brevity he will confine himself to a few of the expressions from the Fathers of the first centuries. No comment from us is necessary. We leave the texts to our readers, just as they are quoted for us.

Tertullian, 2 cent.: "For if thou thinkest heaven is still closed, remember that the Lord left here the keys thereof to Peter, and through him to the Church." Scrip. n. x. pg. 496.

Again in de Perdie, No. 1, he claims the power to forgive, to the truly penitent ones, the most heinous crimes.

Origin, 3 cent.: "He that, like the Apostles, has been breathed upon by Jesus, and who can be known by his fruits as having received the Holy Spirit, after the manner of the Son of God, to each of the things that are to be done according to reason—he forgives whatever God would forgive and retains the sins that are incurable; ministering, as the prophets ministered to God, when they spoke not their own, but the thing of the Divine Will," etc., Tract 1 de Orat., No. 28; Tract 3 in Matth. Tom. xii. No. 14.

St. Cyprian (3d century) "Forsins in lesser offenses, confession is made with inquiry into the life of him who is doing penance, and may any one come to communion, except the hand shall have been imposed on him by the Bishop and clergy, how much more in these most grievous and extreme sins, ought all things to be observed with the caution and moderation according to the discipline of the Lord." Epist. vi ad Frat. Epist. 54 ad Corn. p. 171; Tract in Psalm, 67, No. 25.

St. Ephrem (4th cent.)—"The exalted dignity of the priesthood is far above our understanding, and the power of speech. Remission of sins is not given to mortals without the venerable priesthood." De Lal. III. page 2.

St. Basil (4th cent.)—"If none can forgive sins, as no one can, save God only, and the Holy Ghost forgive sins through the apostles, then is the Holy Ghost God." (Tom. 1, P. 1 adr. Eurom, book 7. pg. 424.)

Again: "In the confession of sins, the same method must be observed as in laying open the infirmities of the body; for as these are not rashly communicated to every one, but to those only who understand by what method they may be cured; so the confession of sins must be made to such persons as have power to apply the remedy." Who are those? St. Basil tells us himself: "Necessarily our sins must be confessed to those to whom has been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God. For thus also are they found to act who did penance of old. For it is written in the Acts, they confessed to the Apostles, by whom also they were baptized." (St. Basil in Kerz. Brev. p. 516.)

Could a bishop of the Catholic Church to-day insist more plainly on the necessity of confession and of declaring one's sins to the priest than does the bishop of the fourth century?

I recommend the reading of Pacian (4th cent.), Gy. I. No. 5, 6, Epist. III. p. 262, Lib. 1 de Pan. ch. II. No. 6, 8, ch. III. No. 10, etc., etc.

I will cite only two texts of his: "If it be not lawful for sins to be forgiven by men, why do you baptize? For assuredly in baptism there is remission of sin. What matters it whether the priests claim the right as having been given by means of penance or baptism. One is the mystery of both. The Germ of God operates."—de Pan. ch. VIII. No. 36, 37.

Again: "It seems impossible for sins to be forgiven by penance. But Christ granted this to His apostles, which has been from the Apostles transmitted to the office of the priests."—de Pan. ch. II. No. 12; Lee de Spix, San. book III. ch. XVIII, No. 137.

Even the Apostolical Constitutions prominent among the old documents appealed to so confidently and unhesi-

tatingly by Brother Denning give long but very plain texts. I only refer to them for brevity's sake: Book 1, ch. XI. PII. ch. XX; book 8, ch. V.

St. Ambrose (4th cent.) testifies to the same power of the priest and Paulinus, his secretary, relates in his life that he used to weep over the penitents whose confessions he heard.

St. Augustine, 5th cent. is just as explicit in his affirmations about the necessity of confession and priestly absolution. Let us note a few texts only: "Let the sinner receive the manner of his satisfaction from those who are set over the sacraments." Lem 457; No. 11. "Our merciful God wills us to confess in this world, that we may not be confounded in the other." Hom. xx., No. 7. Again: "Let no one say to himself, I do penance to God in private, I do it before God. Is it then in vain that Christ hath said, whosoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be lost in heaven? Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church? Do we make void the Gospel; void the words of Christ?" Lem. Hom. 292.

Here are texts enough for a score of sermons.

NOTRE DAME DE PARIS.

On the occasion of the opening of the Cathedral, in May last, we wrote an editorial on the subject of Cathedrals in general. We afterwards learned that our article was copied into a London publication which one of our subscribers receives. The subscriber in question wrote to us to inform us of the fact and adds: "I admired your splendid pen picture of the Cathedral of Milan. I would be very thankful if you could furnish me with some details concerning the history and beauties of Notre Dame in Paris." We did not reply to this at the time, for two reasons: the first, that we were too crowded with subjects upon which we were obliged to unite, and the second, that we had not sufficient information to enable us to give an answer that might prove satisfactory. Of late, however, the different important ceremonies that have taken place in Notre Dame—the funeral of Carnot not the least of them—have cast a glow of renewed attractiveness around the grand old Church, and we have thought it opportune to say a few words on the subject in this issue.

Notre Dame Cathedral is one of the great temples of the world; it is a picture of the immutability of the Church of Rome; it has weathered the tempests of seven centuries and is as solid and beautiful to-day as it was when founded in 1163. It is built upon an island in the middle of the river Seine. The island was once called *la Cite*—it was the heart of the ancient city of Paris. The Cathedral rests upon the site of a church that dated back to the fourth century. In 1182 Notre Dame was consecrated; it had been battered more than once, but in 1845 it was entirely renovated.

The following account of its architecture and dimensions may suffice to show what a wonderful edifice it is:

"The facade, which is very beautiful, dates from the thirteenth century, and has served as a model for many other churches in the northeastern part of France. It is divided into three vertical sections by plain buttresses, and consists of three stories exclusive of the towers. There are some noble sculptures in the recessed portals, the relief representing the burial of the Virgin being especially noteworthy. A series of niches contain modern statues of twenty-eight French kings.

The church, which consists of a nave and double aisles, crossed by a single transept, is 417 feet long and 156 feet wide. The choir is circular in form, as in most early Gothic churches. The vaulting, 110 feet high in the nave, is borne by seventy-five pillars. The towers are 223 feet high, and the view from one of them is one of the finest in Paris. In the south tower hangs the great Bourbon de Notre Dame, which weighs sixteen tons, and is one of the largest bells in

existence, the clapper alone weighing nearly half a ton. There is another bell here which was brought as a trophy from Sebastopol. A notable feature of the exterior architecture of the church are the gargoyles or projecting spouts with grotesque carvings."

Like the Church, this old temple has known many perils and tempests, but the dangers swept past and the storms died away, and the mighty towers of the Cathedral look down upon Paris even as if nothing had ever occurred since the day of its foundation. During the "Reign of Terror," Notre Dame was desecrated in a most abominable manner. In 1793 a decree was issued by which the destruction of the Cathedral was ordered; but shame, a remnant of patriotism, and perhaps fear combined therewith, caused the decree to be recalled. The infidel revolutions turned it into a "Temple of Reason," and a low and abandoned woman,—dressed up as the Goddess of Liberty, was enthroned for adoration upon the High Altar. Napoleon I. reopened it in 1802. In the revolution of 1871 the Commune used it as a barracks. Yet it has survived them all. To-day we can only imagine the scenes of edification that Notre Dame has known. From its aged pulpit Bossuet poured forth his inimitable eloquence; Bourdaloue thundered against error; the gentle Fenelon admonished kings—and, in later years, its vaulted roof rang with sublime sermons of Lacordaire, Pere Felix, Mgr. Dupanloup, Pere Monsabre, and a host of other mighty expounders of Truth.

Notre Dame of Paris, properly understood, is the history of France preserved in stone.

LUTHER'S DEATH.

The life and character of "the great Reformer," Martin Luther, are too well known to require repetition. In fact all honest Protestants acknowledge that he was a disgrace to humanity. But every person is not aware of how this apostate and debauched monk closed his eventful life. A correspondent in a recent issue of the Irish-Catholic, gives the translation of an authentic document, which has been proven to be a statement made by one of Luther's servants. There is no denying the truth of this paper; and even were some ultra-Lutherans to seek by any means to discredit it, the facts of his life are so well known that they alone would give the document a sufficient guarantee. Because Luther was a bad man is not the sole evidence of the falseness of Protestantism; Luther might have been a very debased character and still have possibly told a great deal of truth and done a considerable amount of meritorious work. But the fact of his life being one long series of disobediences to every law of God—as well as of the Church—suffices to fling a strong ray of suspicion upon the religion that he founded; and suspicion is a fair ground for enquiry; and enquiry brings out the truth.

Luther was once a zealous priest of the Order of Ermits of St. Augustine. So fearful was the punishment that God inflicted upon the arch-apostate, that his own servant, a man perverted by him, returned to the Church, and wrote the detailed account of the so-called Reformer's death. It is an authentic deposition, a copy of which is preserved in the Vatican Library. The learned Sedulius, while on a visit to Fribourg, in Brisgau, Baden, found the document, studied it, and published it at Antwerp in 1606, under the heading: "A sincere and truthful confession of a servant man of Martin Luther, to a pious individual, who has asked him in the name of Religion, how his Master Martin died."