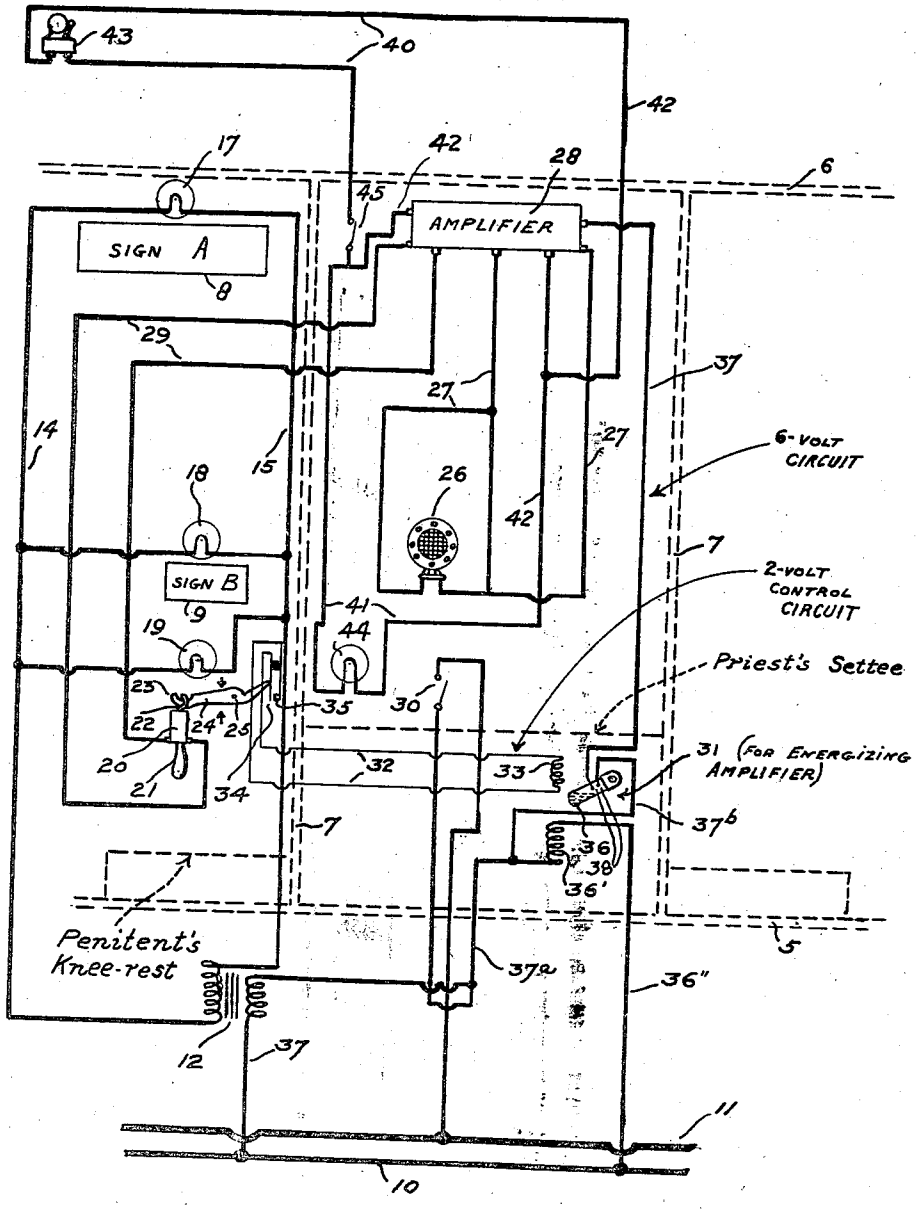
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HEARING AID EQUIPMENT FOR CONFESSIONALS

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HEARING AID EQUIPMENT FOR CONFESSIONALS

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1 Claim. (Cl. 179—1)

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This invention relates to ecclesiastical equipment.

More specifically, the invention pertains to apparatus for facilitating the administration of the Sacrament of Penance of the Catholic Church, and, in particular, to acoustical apparatus for the purpose stated where the penitent is hard of hearing.

It has heretofore been proposed to provide, in regard to a penitent's cubicle of the plural-cubicle article of church furniture colloquially called the confessional, an ear-phone to be placed by him or her on or in back of the ear for transmitting to the audial nerve of the penitent the words of the priest spoken by him into a microphone in the priest's cubicle where the latter is seated.

Children as well as adults "go to confession," and at the appointed times both the young and their elders enter a penitient's cubicle one after another, without special segregation into age groups. Also, the doorway into a penitent's cubicle, and, too, the doorway into the priest's cubicle, each ordinarily closable by a swing-door or a curtain of the portiere type, are never locked against ingress into these cubicles. Catholic churches generally, and always in the larger cities, are freely open to the public, from early morning until late at night, week-days as well as Sundays and Holydays; and, as is well-known children if healthy are generally mischievous—regardless of environment.

With the above referred to ear-phone, as is usual, merely hung on a hook-carrying pivoted arm, spring-pressed or otherwise biased to effect a swing to actuate a switch to close the communication circuit, but normally held by the weight of the therefrom suspended earphone to maintain said circuit open normally, it has been found that children are likely to enter the confessional, one into the priest's cubicle and another into the ear-phone equipped penitent's cubicle, to "play telephone company"; wasting electric power, and subjecting some of the delicate parts of the electrical apparatus to possible damage— and with the entire proceeding a highly indecorus one in a house of worship.

One of the objects of this invention is to provide, in combination with a confessional equipped with telephonic apparatus, a means really efficacious to end repetition of such escapades; and this, preferably, not by throwing a switch in the priest's cubicle to maintain open the communication circuit, in accordance with prior practice, but, instead or in addition acting to give such

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immediate warning, at a suitable point, say in the rectory, of mischief afoot, that the culprit can be apprehended for receipt of a lecture sufficiently stern to cure that particular culprit, at least, of the misdemeanor.

Another object is to provide an insurance against the possibility of a child who, from a waiting line of persons, some adults and some children and gathered near the confessional, enters the confessional when his turn is reached, from impishly or idly removing the earphone from its suspending pivoted arm or lever, as for temporary entertainment while in the penitent's cubicle and waiting for the priest to conclude administration of the Sacrament to a penitent in another penitent's cubicle. It may be explained that the standard confessional is one having three cubicles, a central one for the priest, and oppositely adjoining ones each for one of two penitents; with means in both the side walls of the priest's cubicle, such as a slidable panel, whereby when one of the penitents is actually at confession the other is precluded from hearing the conversation between the priest and the confessing penitent.

The second-mentioned object is attained, preferably, by providing a special switch operated by swinging of the aforesaid pivoted arm or lever as the result of removing the ear-phone therefrom; this switch in circuit with a signal, desirably an electric light bulb of low candle power, in the priest's cubicle, which bulb is energized whenever and during all the time the ear-phone is off the hook on said arm.

Various other objects and advantages of the invention will be hereinafter pointed out or become apparent in the course of the following description of a now preferred embodiment of the invention as illustratively shown in the accompanying drawing, which is largely diagrammatic, both as to its showings of the cubicles of the confessional, and as to where the various leads of the circuits are shown located.

Referring more in detail to the drawing, the broken lines respectively indicate, at **5** the floor of the church, at **6** the roof of the confessional, and at **7**, **7** the side walls of the priest's cubicle; one penitent's cubicle being beyond one of these walls and the other penitent's cubicle beyond the other wall.

Ordinarily, only one of the penitent's cubicles of a particular confessional (a plurality of the latter being usually in a church) is equipped with the telephonic hearing aid; and for this rea-

son, and to simplify the drawing, that is the situation herein illustrated.

In connection with the penitent's cubicle thus equipped, it is customary to provide an exterior sign and an interior sign; the preferred practice being to have these signs of translucent material, to be illuminated by a backing electric light bulb. The exterior sign is indicated at **8**, and the interior sign at **9**; the latter, of course, lighted up by a bulb of low candle power. The sign **8** may read "Equipped with hearing device"; and the sign **9** may read "For those hard of hearing, lift receiver and place on or in back of ear."

Such signs have previously been employed, as also the following elements of the communication system shown in the drawing: Across main supply lines **10** and **11**, for, say, 110 volts, is the high voltage coil of a step-down transformer **12** for setting up a 6-volt potential in a circuit including leads **14** and **15**, and in which in parallel are electric lights bulbs **17**, **18** and **19**. The bulb **17** illuminates sign **8**, the bulb **18** sign **9**, and the bulb **19** the location of the ear-phone or receiver **20**; the latter having a handle **21** and an eye **22** for engaging a hook **23** formed on a pivoted arm or lever **24** fulcrumed at **25**. When the receiver **20** is lifted from the arm **24**, a normally open communication circuit is closed; such circuit including the priest's microphone **26**, leads **27**, **27**, amplifier **28**, and leads **29**, **29** between the amplifier and the receiver **20**; provided, of course, the hand-switch **30** in the priest's cubicle has been closed by him—and, provided, further, the current source **10—11** is connected in.

In the case of the present invention, this connecting in of the current source is shown as effected by energizing the well-known electrical device termed a transformer-relay (of which one type, purchasable on the open market, is manufactured by Mercoid Corporation, Chicago, Ill.) indicated generally and more or less schematically at **31**, and functioning as a 2-volt-control circuit means, and hence as a working part of a 2-volt control circuit for the communication circuit. This control circuit includes leads **32**, **32**, each between one of the ends of a coil **33** of the transformer-relay and one of two contacts **34**, **35**, adjacent to the arm of the receiver-suspending lever **24** opposite to the arm thereof carrying the hook **23**. Normally, these contacts are separated; but, as will be seen, when the lever becomes relieved of suspending the weight of the receiver, the resilient blade which constitutes the contact **34** is cammed into engagement with contact **35**, thereby closing the control circuit.

The manner in which closing of the control circuit effects connection of the amplifier with the power source will be readily understood when it is explained that the connection last-mentioned includes a tiltable liquid-mercury switch **36** normally lying to interrupt current flow relative to leads **37**, **37***a* and **37***b* interposed between the amplifier and the power-supply line **10**. When the coil **33** of the transformer-relay is energized by closing of the control circuit, however, the magnetic fields set up about said coil and the other coil **36'** of said relay, the latter in a lead **36''**, coact to cause a tilt of the switch **36** sufficiently to cause flow of the mercury pool therein to the end thereof entered by end points of the leads **37**, **37** and so conductively couple these points.

At the same time, in parallel with the communication circuit **27—29** is a first signal circuit **40**, and a second signal circuit **41**.

The signal circuit **40** includes leads **42** and extends preferably to a point a distance from the confessional, say to the rectory, for actuating a signal there; illustrated as an electric bell **43**.

The signal circuit **41** is desirably local to the confessional, for inspection, by the priest while in his cubicle, of the signal actuated by the closing of this circuit. This signal is illustrated as an electric light bulb **44** of low lumen-value.

The last-named circuit may have interposed therein a hand-switch, shown at **45**, and desirably located in the priest's cubicle, whereby, when the priest takes up his post there, he may render the signal circuit **40** inoperative for the time being.

Thus, whenever the receiver **20** is lifted from its support for its intended purpose, which means that the priest is in his cubicle, the latter is apprised of the fact that he should now whisper into the microphone; whereas, if the receiver is ever lifted from its support for a mischievous or malicious purpose, notification will be given immediately at the proper point, say in the public hall of the rectory.

It is to be understood that all matter contained in the above specification or shown in the accompanying drawing is to be taken in an illustrative and not in a limiting sense. The scope of protection contemplated is to be taken solely from the appended claim, this to be interpreted as broadly as is consistent with the prior art.

Variations and modifications may be made within the scope of the invention, and parts of the improvements may be used without others.

I claim:

In apparatus of the kind described and including a confessional having a priest's cubicle and a penitent's cubicle and with a telephone transmitter in the priest's cubicle and a telephone receiver in the pentitent's cubicle and with means manually operable from within the penitent's cubicle to close a normally open gap in a communication circuit including said transmitter and receiver, the combination of a signal, a circuit other than the communication circuit in which said signal is interposed, and means for actuating said signal when said gap is closed, the last-named means including a control circuit for the second-mentioned circuit and also including a transformer relay partially interposed in the control circuit and partially interposed in said second-mentioned circuit.

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