
Confession in the Church of Rome: what it is and what it does

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CONFESSIO

IN THE

CHURCH OF ROME :

WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES.

BY

A. S. MORIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

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DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE;" "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SATAN;"
&c., &c.



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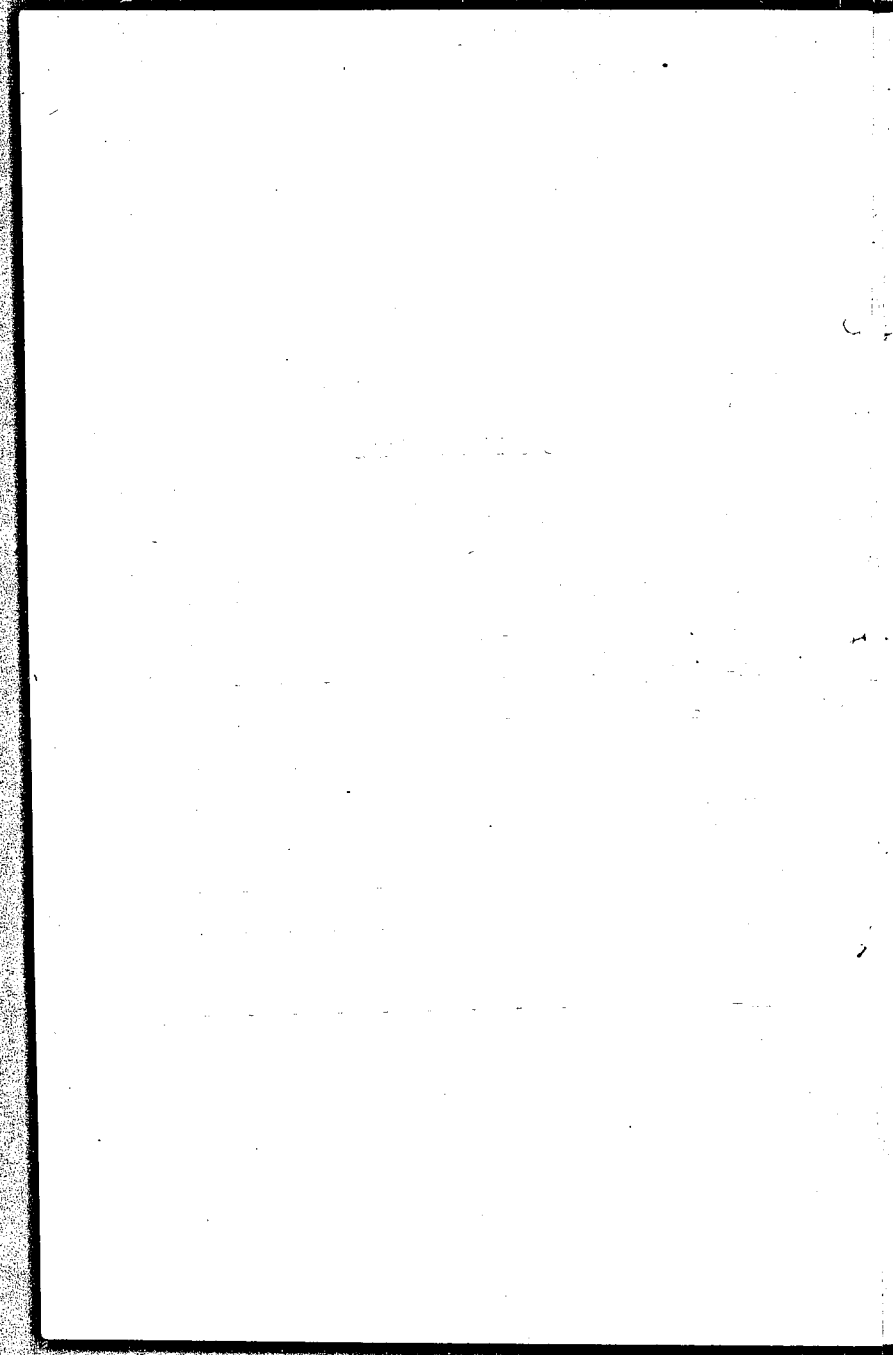
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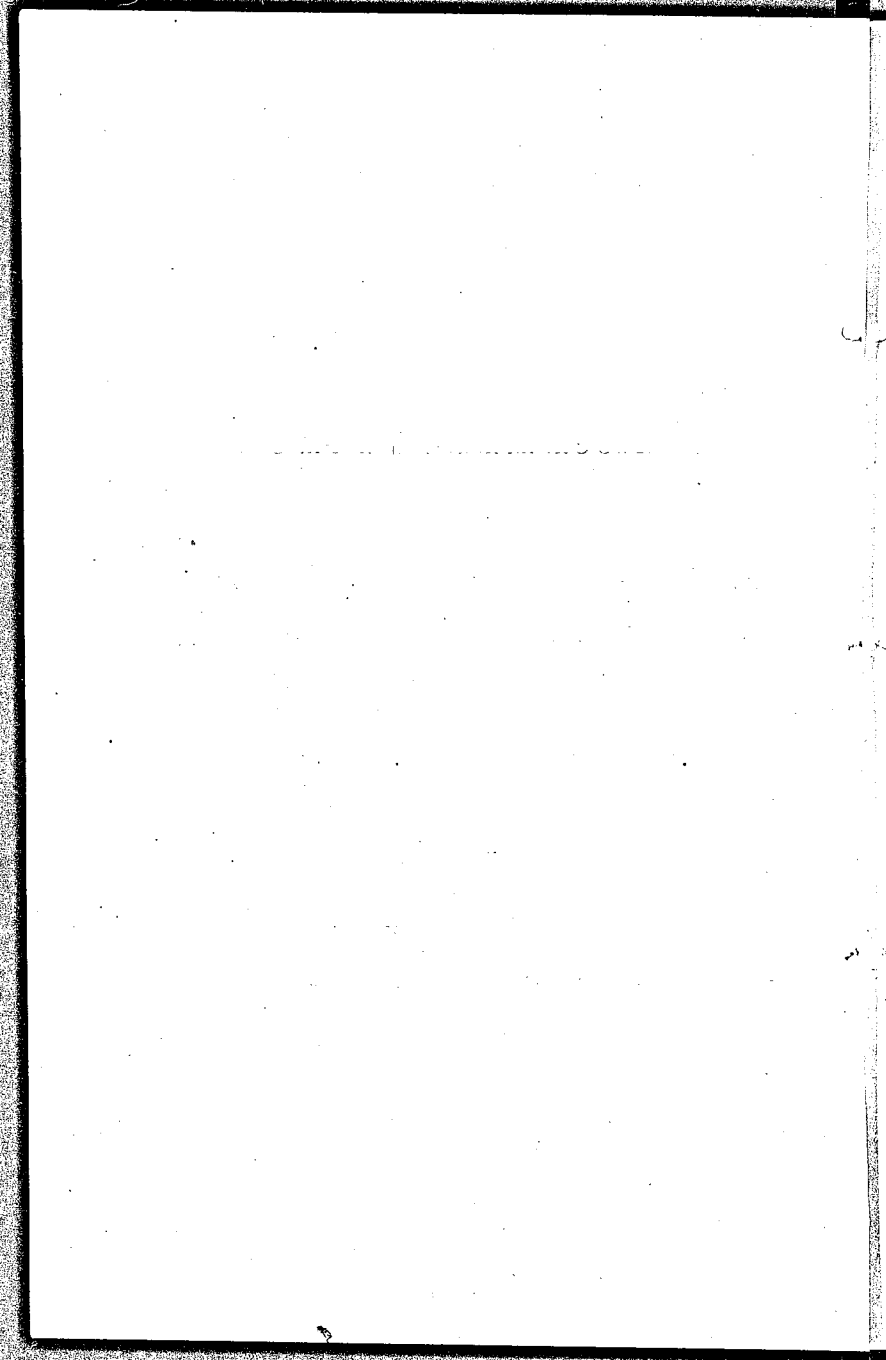
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

THE learned and able author of the following pages, who is specially well read on religious subjects, and who in Parliament and with his pen has long done his best to promote the true interests of humanity by promoting its emancipation from error and vice, and from sacerdotalism, their too plentiful source, is the author of two other excellent contributions that he has made to the collection whence this work is taken, namely, *Bibliothèque Démocratique* (Democratic Library), an enterprise in favour of Liberty and Intelligence, in which are engaged literary men of high repute. Already five and thirty volumes have appeared, of which, besides this piece, two are from our author's pen, namely, "The Separation of the Church from the State" and "The Marriage of Priests," both of which we are authorised to introduce into our "Anti-Papal Library." We may mention, among other contributions to the literature of his country by M. Morin, his "Fantaisies Theologiques, Le Pretre et le Sorcier, Examen du Christianisme." Much may be expected from his "L'Esprit de l'Eglise," which he announces to us as shortly to be issued. —Since this was written the work has been published, and is of great value.



I.

THE ORIGIN OF CONFESSION.

CONFESSION is one of the institutions which have the most contributed to extend and consolidate the domination of the sacerdotal caste.

It is specially by it that the Catholic clergy reigns as absolute master over the conscience, and holds the people under its yoke.

Christianity is not answerable for its existence. In more ancient religions we find confession established as it is established in Romanism. Among the Hindoos, followers of Brahmanism, the Gurus are the directors of conscience, have power to remit all sin, and the forms they observe call to mind those of the Catholic ritual.* In the religion of Zoroaster you find precepts and practices relative to confession identical with what has been observed at different times in the Christian religion. Thus you find public avowal and pardon of sins; auricular confession made to priests; the penance they impose on and the absolution they give to sinners; finally, a kind of pope, to whom God is declared to have given the keys of heaven.† Buddhism, which is many years anterior to Christianity, also practises confession. Buddha himself instituted it among his monks, and even among his ordinary disciples. Twice every month, at the new and the full moon, the monks confess their sins before Buddha and before the congregation. It is only by repentance and shame before others, as well as in your own

* See "Moeurs et Institutions des Peuples de l'Inde." Par l'Abbé Dubois; I. 206. Also Lasteyrie "Histoire de la Confession," p. 33. Translated into English by Charles Cox, B.L. London, Bentley, 1848, p. 40, seq.—*Translator.*

† Anquetil-Duperron, "Zend Avesta."

thoughts, that you can redeem yourself. Powerful kings confessed to Buddha the crimes which they had committed, and it is by this painful avowal that the guilty expiated their misdeeds.* Among the ancient Greeks confession, although not being general, was known and practised. The initiated of the mysteries of Samothrace made their confession to the priest.† Plutarch, tracing the portrait of a superstitious person, says: "He will, when quite naked, roll himself in mire, he will confess and declare I know not what faults and sins that he has committed, how he has eaten and drunk this and that, or that he has gone into some place whither God forbid him to go."‡ Apollonius of Thyana, sailing on the Nile, met with a young man who offered to become one of his disciples. "Young man," said the philosopher to him, "tell me what good and evil you have done, in order that you may obtain forgiveness by my ministry, and that you may give yourself up to philosophy with my disciples."§ Neither in the Gospels, nor in the other writings of the New Testament, nor in the ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries do you find any trace of auricular confession.|| Jesus Christ forbid every kind of pre-eminence and hierarchy among his disciples. He said that he who wished to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven must become as little children. (Matt. xviii. 1-4). He also said to his disciples, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave, even as the Son of Man came, not to be served, but to serve and to give his soul a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25 seq). Moreover, he said, "Be ye not called Rabbi (teacher) for one is your teacher, Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man Father upon earth,

* Barthelemy Saint-Hillaire, "Le Boudha et sa Religion," p. 91.

† Plutarch, "De la Superstition," p. 20.

‡ Havet, "Le Christianisme et ses Origines;" l' Hellenisme, r. 66.

§ Philostrates, Vie d' Apollonius, vi. 3.

|| The only confession mentioned in the New Testament is the reciprocal admission by disciples of their faults one to another, accompanied by mutual prayer to God for forgiveness and a forgiving spirit. James v. 16.—*Translator.*

for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. xxiii. 8 seq). To the same effect is his "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. vii. 1). Thus are all pretensions to jurisdiction interdicted by anticipation. It is impossible to condemn more emphatically the prerogative which the priests have assumed, and still exercise, of judging and acquitting the disciples of Christ. That prerogative Jesus claimed for himself, and put it into practice as a matter of right, on the ground that he "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins"* (Mark ii. 10). In the canonical Scriptures there is not a single example that any man except Jesus either claims or exercises the right or the power to forgive sin.

Persons in the New Testament, after their misdeeds, and notably Peter after denying Jesus, repent and are absolved, but are not seen going to confession. In the Acts of the Apostles the life of the first believers is described with some detail, but never do you see confession forming a part of it. If, however, it had been prescribed by Jesus, it would have been practised from the beginning; and in such a case it could not fail to have been mentioned either in the narratives or the letters of the Apostles. Ananias said to Paul when now repentant, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16). But here sin is forgiven without confession. We do indeed see new converts own their transgressions (Acts xix. 18); but this is simply a spontaneous and public act, unaccompanied, so far as the Scripture goes, by any sacerdotal presence or deed.

* In the fourth Gospel (xx. 23) Jesus is represented as saying to the disciples then present, and on whom he breathed the Holy Spirit, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Whatever the function implied, the power to communicate it is not imparted, and the function itself was the special property of those to whom it was given. The passage, however, looks like a papal forgery, as is 1 John v. 7, by universal admission, and certainly the fourth Gospel did not see the light until the rulers of the Church were sufficiently debased to create their own authorities. Emphatically does the Almighty declare by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (xliii. 25). The exclusiveness of this divine prerogative becoming the national faith found utterance in the presence of Jesus (Mark ii. 7; Luke v. 21) who made one sole exception in himself as God's herald and representative (Matt. ix. 6). Here the history of the matter ends; tradition, tradition ever more corrupt, added the rest.—*Translator.*

Among the primitive Christians confession of sins was addressed solely to God, whose law had been broken, and who alone could forgive the breach. The members of the Church were directed to apply to His clemency for their pardon, while on His part His love and goodness were ever ready to forgive such as were truly sorry for their transgressions, such sorrow being a guarantee against the repetition of the offence. Thus every thing passed in its proper channels and within its own bounds. The sincerity of the repentance could be ascertained only by Him who reads the hearts he has formed and supports. In its essence, consequently, the transaction lies between God and man, God and each individual. So purely personal and individual is the relation thus established between God and each conscience, that in the uncorrupt ages Christians never imagined that absolution given by man could bring the pardon of sin. The submission of the sinner, and his consequent reconciliation to the Church, might be, and was ratified by the Church, manifesting itself by the laying on of hands, but by no means did this entail absolution from God, although as a first step it might help the penitent, and lead him to such confession to his Creator as would secure it. Nor was the reconciliation completed until the last and most important act was performed, and the sinner, being made one with God, in faith, love, and obedience, was allowed to share in all the sacred rites.

The confession to God was of necessity secret, that to the Church was public. The secrecy rightly observed toward God was transferred to the privacy of the priests in confession. And so auricular confession came into use. The ear of the priest was substituted for the ear of God. The change was momentous and fearful. Religion lost its sanctity in losing its privacy. Instead of the play of the highest motives, low considerations asserted themselves, which, increasing constantly in number and force, made an act defiling and desecrating which might have exercised the purest and most refining influence. Auricular confession was not practised till several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, and did not become obligatory till the commencement of the thirteenth. "Why," says Chrysostom in the fourth century, "do you blush at declaring your sins? Is it done before

a man by whom you will be despised? before your inferior, who will publish what he hears? Your sin is confessed to your Master, who cares for you, and who heals your sores. He knows them without your uttering them, and foresees them before they exist. No," says the Heavenly Father, "I will not draw you into publicity, nor make you a spectacle to a number of persons. *Disclose your sins to Me alone, in order that I may apply a remedy, and you will be healed. God bids us confess our sins to Him, and to give an account thereof to none but to Him.* He remits our sins, and does not force us to lay them open to men, with their accompanying circumstances; all He asks is that he on whom so great a benefit has been conferred should truly acknowledge its value and importance."* Somewhat later, Hilary, in speaking of the confession of his crimes which David made to God, adds: "He teaches us that we ought not to confess to any other than to Him who makes the olive tree fructify by the hope of His mercy."† Augustin (354-430 A.D.) condemns every kind of confession made to men. "What need," says he, "have I that men should hear my confession, as if they were able to apply a remedy to my wounds?"‡ Jerome (331-422) is not less explicit: "It is good," he says, "to confess your sins, not to men, but to God, who alone can heal us. To Him confess your sins, for He is good and will remit them." §

Notwithstanding these grave authorities, whose testimonies we could multiply, the priests, bent on making themselves more and more necessary, succeeded in establishing the belief that their ministry in the matter was indispensable, that to them alone belonged the right to give absolution, and that remission of sins could not take place except on condition of a detailed confession made by the sinner to themselves. To attain this object they had recourse to a forced or mystic interpretation of the Scriptures, to the supposition of a tradition and of imaginary miracles, to excommunication, to persecutions, and even to temporal penalties

* Chrysostom's Works: Benedictine Edition, ii., 240, 663.

† Comment on Psalm li., Benedictine Edition, 1693, p. 79.

‡ Confessions, x. 3.

§ Works: Martiany's Edition, 1699, ii., 306, 405; on Ps. xci., on Ps. cvi.

against those who refused to submit to their jurisdiction. At last their victory was completed and consecrated by the Council of the Lateran, held in 1215, under Pope Innocent III., which imposed on all Christians the obligation of confessing at least once a year to the ordinary or parish priest. There were also some protests on the part of eminent theologians, but their efforts were nullified by the theocratic spirit. The law must be submitted to, and it was admitted that the priest was henceforward the indispensable intermediary between God and man, charged with the scrutiny of consciences; with sitting in judgment on all misdeeds; with pronouncing verdict and judgment sovereignly in the name of God, and with opening at his pleasure the gates of heaven or the gates of hell.

II.

CASUISTRY.

THE adoption of this rule introduced into the Church a collection of precepts on the manner in which the confessor was to discharge his office.

Formerly it had been sufficient for the sinner to lay his sins before God, or in serious cases to publicly manifest his repentance in a meeting of fellow-believers, in order to obtain their intercession, so as to facilitate a reconciliation. But henceforth it was in secret and before the priest alone that his conscience must be laid bare, in virtue of an enumeration in detail of all his misdeeds, together with (if any) aggravating circumstances. On his part, it was the business of the confessor, before giving or refusing pardon, to appreciate the nature of the transgressions. Hence arose a catalogue of all imaginable sins, classified in categories, and estimated as to their gravity. Instead of drawing inspiration from the eternal principles of natural morals, instead of recurring to the dictates of good sense and right feeling, the theologians heaped up subtleties and sophistries to form their code of *Cases of Conscience*. The mania of cavilling led them to a crowd of paradoxical solutions, and made them adopt a kind of scepticism fitted to legitimate vice, and to authorise the worst actions. The strangest and most dangerous theories have been sustained by able doctors, the greater part of whom bore high ecclesiastical dignities, and whose decisions are law with the clergy. They invented what bears the name of *Probableism*, according to which you may take any part whatever, provided you have for your view the opinion of an author of repute—a fact which suffices to make your view probable. It is the opposite of that wise maxim of the ancients, "In

doubt abstain." There are *mental reserves* which allow you to take a false oath, provided that in taking it you silently add an explanation which corrects it; there are also *directions of your intention*, by means of which you may commit bad acts by internally applying to them a good purpose. Thus were these ecclesiastical casuists led to reverse the basis of all morality, to sanction a multitude of infamies, on the sole condition of a sort of compromise of the sinner with his conscience, as if, by the aid of vain sophisms, you could change the nature of things, and transform evil into good. The Jesuits especially excelled in this dangerous art, and Escobar, one of them, acquired great repute by the marvellous facility with which he found the means of colouring with a specious pretext the most reprehensible deeds. Accordingly, *Jesuitism* and *Escobardism* have become a part of the French language to express the tricks by which you delude others and delude yourself as to the culpability of your conduct. Pascal stigmatised this pernicious school with as much reason as skill; the irony of his "Provincials"* dealt a mortal blow on the Jesuits themselves as well as the casuists. But although it is particularly against the Jesuits that he directed his slashing exposures, it ought to be said that the responsibility of the perversions does not lie on them alone; they only reproduced and vulgarised such sophistries as had been admitted by the Church at large, and which have by no means ceased to prevail therein. This casuistry forms a part of the ecclesiastical instruction which is never modified, and still remains embarrassed with scholastic swaddling clothes of the middle ages.

The casuistry of Catholicism then still survives; partaking of its inviolability, it continues to form the mind of the collegians, and from time to time it produces lucubrations as unclean as those whose perversities were flogged by Pascal. Among the works which supply nutriment to the young Levites destined to play the part of educators of society, we may mention "Theologia Moralis" (*Moral Theology*) of Liguori; the "Institutiones Theologicæ" (*Theological Institutes*) of Bouvier, Bishop of Mans; the "Compendium" of

* See "Les Provinciales ou Lettres de Louis Montalte," par Blaise Pascal, précédées d'une Notice par L. Lemerrier, Paris, 1829. A Translation into English appeared in 1847.—*Translator*.

Moulet (Fribourg, 1834); that of Guri; the "Mechialogie" of the R. P. Debreyne; the treatise of Soettler, entitled "In Sextum Decalogi Præceptum Prelectiones" (*Lectures on the Sixth Command of the Decalogue*) re-edited and annotated by M. Rousselet, professor in the college of Grenoble.

We proceed to give an idea of these moral guides.

Bouvier puts the question whether it is permitted to take an oath of fidelity to a usurper, and to accept employment from him. He replies affirmatively, but adds this condition, that you interiorly reserve fidelity to the legitimate prince. Here you have before you the mental reserve of the Jesuits. The expedient is convenient, and allows you to supplement the merits of fidelity with the profits of infidelity. This is not all. If on a later day the legitimate prince requires your services, you ought forthwith to place yourself under his standard, turn against the usurper the power you hold from him, and even run him down and kill him without the forms of law, *privatim occidere** (to kill him privately). And as in case of doubt on the legitimacy of pretenders, it belongs to the Church, the sovereign arbiter in morality, to pronounce the decision, the Church also will make choice of one of the pretenders, will stamp on his claim the blot of usurpation, and devote him to the poignard of some new Jacques Clement. This is the justification of regicide as it is found in the casuists of the sixteenth century. The theories of Bouvier cannot fail to find their application, and the governments that have sprung from the Revolution are exposed to encounter among their pious functionaries only provisional devotedness, which will turn to the right about at the first appeal of the new Joash. Well will it be if then there is not found some fanatic who will follow to their natural end the precepts of the learned bishop. The same authority justifies slavery and the slave trade,† the most monstrous practices under which humanity has groaned.

Moulet decides that an inferior, obeying his chief with a good intention, acts meritoriously, although his act is materially contrary to the law of God. As it is always the confessor which ought to be the guide of a good Catholic, he who

* "Institutiones Philosophicæ," 6th edition, 628-630.

† "Institutiones Philosophicæ," 588-590.

receives from his confessor the order to commit a crime may obey with full safety of conscience, for his intention (to obey his confessor) is good, and his only object has been to show his obedience to him, who is with himself, God's organ on earth. Thus is it that in the name of heaven ecclesiastical authority led to assassination Balthazard Gerard, Jacques Clement, Jean Chatel, Ravailac, and others; thus is it that the omnipotence which the clergy has arrogated to themselves over consciences has given them the means of disposing of populations as they please, and of disturbing Europe, and making it red with human blood.

Liguori, after having, as a general theme, condemned castration, puts forward this particular question: "If it is permitted to make infants eunuchs in order to procure a fine voice?" As a genuine probableist, he avoids deciding, and limits himself to the part of reporter of the issue. He cites authorities in favour of the negative; but according to him the affirmative has on its behalf grave doctors, who give for reason that the operation does not take place contrary to the will of the children; that in procuring for them a fine voice, you put them into possession of a position honourable and advantageous, and which amply compensates them; that thus they will be able to sing the praises of God more agreeably; and that finally the practice is justified by the custom of the princes of the Church.*

Thus a barbarous custom, which exists no longer except among the despots of Asia, still finds defenders among the ministers of Christ, who, from love of soprano voices, do not fear to mutilate human beings. This clerical prudery; which does not allow women to sing in sacred places, opens the entrance to a castrated man, and authorises the unnatural parents to perform on their male children that execrable crime which the French law punishes with forced labour for life. †

Painful comparison! Not long since there were in Europe only two cities in which offices were reserved for eunuchs. It was Rome and Constantinople, the metropolis of Catholicism and the metropolis of Mohamedism—both governed

* "Theologia Moralis," iii., 374.

† "Code Penal." Art. 316.

by princes who gave themselves out for Vicars of God ; and these Vicars of God trod God's laws, for such are the laws of nature, under foot.

Here follow some other decisions of the casuists :—

“A man of position may kill him who threatens him with a box on the ear or a blow from a stick.*” . . . Certainly we are here far from him who said, “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. v. 39). “It is permitted even to clergymen and to monks to kill those who wish to take from them their temporal goods.” †

“If being pursued by an enemy, and fleeing from him down a narrow path, you cannot save yourself except by crushing a person who bars your passage, you are right in doing so, provided that individual, if a child, is baptised.” ‡ Casuists have decided that a monk may in conscience calumniate and even kill persons whom he believes to be in a condition to inflict injury on his society.§

“One may,” says Sanchez, “swear that he has not done a certain thing, although really he has done it, understanding with himself that he did not do it on a certain day, or before he was born, or understanding some other similar circumstance, without his words having in them anything which makes the reserve known. And this is very convenient in many conjunctures, and always just when it is necessary or useful for health, honour, or property.” ||

It is specially on sensual topics that the imagination of theologians has exercised itself. Far from being stopped by the difficulties of so delicate a subject, they have made it their duty to present it under all its aspects. They do not spare the reader a single obscenity, they even invent unheard of refinements of debauchery, in order to have the pleasure of discussing them. The voluminous works of Sanchez, Saures, Sa, Liguori, Soettler, Bouvier, &c., are filled with

* Liguori, “Theologia Moralis,” iii., 381-385.

† Liguori, “Theologia Moralis,” *ibid.*

‡ Liguori, “Theologia Moralis,” 393.

§ Le Pere Lamy, “Cours de Theologie,” I., Disput. 36, No. 118 : edition of Anvers, 1640. Escobar, “Somme de la Theologie Morale :” Treatise i., Examen 7, iii., 45.

|| Sanchez, “Op Moral,” part ii., lib. iii., cap. vi., No. 14 ; Lyon, 1661. Vol. ii., p. 25, 26.

particulars so disgusting that they surpass the most filthy productions of libertinism, so that it would be impossible to translate them into French.*

They allow nothing to escape them ; they discourse on all sorts of sensual pleasure, especially on what the most extravagant imagination can venture on ; they leisurely examine what is lawful ; they fix the precise limits where sin begins, whether the sin is mortal or simply venial, and by what term it should be called. They do not propose to confine themselves within the sphere of abstractions, nor to cultivate their pretended science as a matter of simple curiosity. Their aim is to supply confessors with practical rules, to form them in the art of questioning penitents, and of directing their conscience. The most rigid confessor, the most scrupulous, nourished in the teachings of these holy doctors, will have nothing more at heart than to walk in the steps traced for him by his learned guides. One subject throws the sagacity of the casuists into strong light: it is marriage. It is not sufficient for them to say that the conjugal union renders carnal gratification between the wedded couple lawful, but they add that they ought to respect one another, and that modesty must not be absent from the conjugal bed. This succinct code suffices everywhere except in the countries where confession has engendered the mania of refining on morals. The doctors foresee all cases, pass through the sieve all the kinds of pleasures in which the couple may indulge, and calculate with exactitude what they may tolerate themselves in. We shall return to this subject when we exhibit the consequences which flow hence on the tranquillity of homes. We are here content with stating that the casuists admit that none of the artifices of sexual pleasure ought to be unknown to the priests, who, nevertheless, are required to observe the most rigid continence.

The books of which we speak are not the work of some obscure scribbler of paradoxes, of some mere book-worm. Liguori has been put into the ranks of the saints,† and the

* I have given some extracts in my "Examen du Christianisme," iii, 195, 196.

† At the time of his canonisation the Sacred Congregation of Rites decided that in all his works, whether printed or not, there is not a word to be blamed,

clergy solicited for him the title of "Doctor of the Church." His "Moral Theology" has been put forth in many editions; annotated by Receveur, professor in the Faculty of Theology of Paris; the work has been regarded as classical in the colleges, as are treatises by Bouvier and Debreyne. These are the manuals of morality, the guides in ecclesiastical instruction, the faithful expression of the teachings of the clergy. And it is before young Levites (candidates for the ministry) that their teachers unfold and discuss all these lascivious subjects; young men who have taken the vow of continence, who, in order to be faithful to it, ought to banish from their mind every sensual thought, and to carefully avoid everything which can excite the passions; these same pupils are obliged to carry their imagination over all the most bewildering scenes of sensuality; they feed on the most lustful pictures; they discourse at length on objects the very name of which is enough to call forth in them a devouring trouble. What ravages must such studies inflict on their souls; how can they remain faithful to their engagements when, from the outset of their career, so much is done of a kind to make purity impossible, or at least to augment the load they have to bear; and how can one even think without a feeling of disgust on that filthy course which is called *The Diaconal*, in which all the turpitudes are explained and developed? With such a list, what must the commentary be! *

* Haureau: pamphlet entitled "Manuel du Clergé," ou Examen de l'ouvrage de M. Bouvier; Le Mans, 1843.

III.

MAN AND CONFESSION.

THE immediate consequence of the practice of confession is, that he who submits to it abdicates all independence, all spontaneousness. He renounces self-direction, to blindly place himself at the disposal of his confessor ; no longer does he belong to himself ; no longer has he to deliberate on the conduct he ought to pursue ; no longer to descend into the depths of his conscience to determine the morality of an act, the legitimacy of an undertaking. He must stifle the voice of his own reason, and in everything consult the priest, who for him holds the place of God. It is the priest that will judge for him, who will finally decide what line he ought to follow. Without murmur must his determination be observed by the penitent, yea, without even an attempt at reflection, for to disallow or even question the authority of the priest is to revolt against God himself.

He must then make bare his soul to that supreme arbiter, unveil to him his most secret thoughts, and become in his hands an inert instrument. It is not only in the religious sphere that the all-powerful influence of the confessor will be exercised ; it will comprise all the modes of human activity ; for there is no such thing as an indifferent act, there is nothing that escapes from the law of religion ; there is then nothing in which a man may not commit an infraction of some requirement of God or the Church. This fact alone makes you wholly liable to the tribunal of ecclesiastical penitence, whose authority has no bounds. As a son, as a husband, as a father, you have duties to perform ; and each of those duties puts you under an obligation of having

recourse to a confessor, who will examine you in order to learn whether you have performed your duties, and performed them properly, and in order to determine what penalty you have incurred by your neglect, be it greater or less. Even if you think you have nothing to reproach yourself with before your judge, that judge may question you and compel you to explain, probably to inculpate yourself. The penitent is required humbly and in a docile spirit to reply to all the confessor's interrogations, to accept all his admonitions, to comply with all his injunctions. Is it a question of reading in your leisure hours? The Church has published a catalogue of books* that Catholics are forbidden to read, under pain of mortal sin and excommunication. Independently of this list of prohibited books, which especially now can by no means contain all works contrary or injurious to orthodoxy, the confessor points out to his penitent the books and the journals which he regards as infected with an irreligious (that is, anti-Catholic) spirit, or with tendencies toward mental and moral emancipation; and the penitent has to take good care not to read a single line of them or even cast an eye thereon; failing here, he would compromise his salvation and bring on himself everlasting woe. He must accordingly deny himself all that might enlighten his mind, and dissipate the salutary darkness in which he is and must remain enveloped. By the same influence and for the same reasons his spiritual guide will forbid him to have any intercourse with the impious, that is, non-Catholics, and specially Free-thinkers, who may become to him occasions of sin or engage him in discussions on matters in regard to which it is his duty to prostrate himself before his confessor, without seeking to understand what is required of him. As a citizen you are to acknowledge a law far superior to the civil law, it is the ecclesiastical law, of which the confessor is the organ and the interpreter. There is not one political question which is not in some way connected with religious interests, and which in consequence ought not to be resolved by religious considerations. Thus the clergy cannot remain neutral in electoral struggles; it has its candidates whom

* The "Index Librorum Prohibitorum," of which there are several editions, varying according to age and country.—*Translator.*

it recommends as most proper to give ascendancy to the cause of the Church, which is the cause of God.

Quite recently several prelates, notably the Archbishop of Chambéry (capital of Savoy), have published authoritative circulars, in which they act in virtue of their pontifical quality, in order to support political candidates devoted to the Holy See. The confessors cannot fail to second their superiors; and the penitent has no alternative but to accept with closed eyes the choice imposed upon him by the director of his conscience. He would think that he committed a grave sin if, disdaining the voice of God's representative, he dared to vote for men branded as the enemies of religion and as imps of hell. The Catholic, invested with public functions, will never lose from view what he has been taught to think the interests of religion, and when needful he will be required by his confessor to give them his official, as well as personal, support. The confessor, acting as a vigilant sentinel, will watch every step he sets, and be always ready to bring him to that obedience which, with the penitent, is the first of duties. As a magistrate, a judge, a jurymen, a member of deliberative assemblies, it is always under this impulse that he will have to act. Thus the observance of confession will produce a debasement of character, and tend more and more to extinguish in the individual all power of initiation, all self-control, all vital energy. Moreover, it takes from him all moral value; for he has lost the habit of acting for himself, he has ceased to reflect, he has become something that really belongs to another. He is the property of the priest. He now asks not whether a thing is right or wrong, but whether it is allowed by his confessor; he no longer troubles himself with principles, he is content with particulars; he has placed his entire personality in the hands of him whose will absorbs his own will.

IV.

WOMAN AND CONFESSION.

WOMAN confession condemns to the most humiliating condition. By a strange privilege, the priesthood belongs to only the male sex. Woman cannot hear a confession, and she is obliged to confess to a man. By this a wound is inflicted on the sentiment of modesty which naturally inclines a woman to select a confiding friend in one of her own sex. A young woman has committed an act of immorality: to whom shall she confide her trouble, her disquietudes, her remorse? To her mother certainly, for she is the guide and *confidante* given her by nature. In the absence of her mother, she may consult a woman who unites maturity of age with kindness of heart, and whose general character invites her confidence. But the Church wills that the unfortunate girl shall open her mind to a man—a man who has made a vow of not knowing the love which has proved her stumbling-block, a man who in no way understands the mysteries of a woman's heart. This stranger, who professes to be above all human frailties, will have the right of penetrating into the most hidden folds of her mind. Is not such a trial full of peril for the penitent, from whose delicacy it removes the first buddings of delicacy? And if the girl has preserved all the virginhood of her soul, how much will she have to suffer from the formal and repeated questions of the confessor, and how often will the priest be the first to unveil to her mysteries of which she should remain ignorant!

Soettler requires the priest to question penitents as to the germinations of the sexual impulse, the means they take to tranquilise them, and to ask of them whether they have

experienced their result. The same casuist recommends the confessor to skilfully ask women and grown up girls if, in playing with animals, they have not had some feeling of concupiscence.* And for the priest himself what peril! He has renounced his sex, and sworn to be insensible and cold. And a woman approaches him, and converses with him in a privacy which amounts or may amount to secrecy. He breathes her breath; he hears her most intimate confidences, she has to report to him the state of her affections, to speak to him of her passions, and her control over them—whether small, great, absolute, or inconsiderable; the dangers she runs, the temptations by which she is besieged—perhaps of her failures—involuntary sins it may be, but also voluntary; to learn her condition which he has to heal he must transfer himself into it; he must, so to say, realise it to himself. Will he not be likely to drink in greedily those enticing descriptions? May he not in thought share her impulses? May he not be captivated by what he hears, and hence prolong the interview? Such an interview often repeated is likely to be fatal. True, he has a vow; but what are vows when the passions are kindled and opportunity serves? True, she shrinks from pollution; but *can* a priest pollute—a priest, whose very essence is sanctity? Some may come off victorious, but the bulk will succumb. Father Hyacinthe, in a lecture given at Rome in April, 1872, reported a statement made by the present pope to the effect that in a hundred priests some one or two are all who keep their vows of chastity.

Confession introduces into families an extremely baneful influence. The confessor, as we have seen, is authorised and required to learn all that passes in conjugal intimacy. He questions the wife on details of all kinds, which she has to explain minutely; for the couple cannot interchange tokens of love except by conforming to the rules fixed by the casuists; if they deviate from them they commit now a venial and now a mortal sin, and so they fall under the jurisdiction of the confessor. The treatises of the theologians make provision for everything, and the priest is obliged to exact the strict observance of all. Here then we find the

* Soettler, edition of Rousselet, 1844, p. 13.

wife under the necessity of giving an account of all her thoughts, impulses, as well as deeds. Her modesty must suffer; and, by constant repetition of these scrutinies, the priest, even unintentionally, sows in her heart the seeds of corruption. What follows? A pure-minded woman, who would blush to mention these things to her nearest friend, experiences no difficulty in speaking at length of them with her confessor. Of course, her virtue is shaken, and sometimes the confessor himself is seduced to profit by her fall.

Saint Liguori, in agreement with the decisions of the most learned canonists, interdicts the use of marriage during pregnancy, the days of communion, and the great festivals of the year. Some of the ancient canons prescribe to the couple continence during the whole of Lent. "Christians," says the Abbe Fleury, "abstain from the use of marriage on the solemn days of festival and fast, and generally they live in continence when they wish to give themselves up to prayer, according to the precept of the Apostle (1 Cor. vii. 5). Tertullian bears testimony that several observed continence by common consent."*

What will take place when the wife, obeying the injunctions of her confessor, shall refuse her caresses to her husband? For the most part he will be indignant at the interference of a third party. How annoying for him that a stranger has preponderant authority in his home. If he insists, quarrels arise, reproaches ensue, coolness, alienation, to end, it may be, in separation. Reciprocal affection, first lessened, is lost for ever.

There is another point which frequently produces discord between husband and wife. The clergy condemn with all their force "the abominable calculation having for its aim to restrict the number of children, and thereby diminishing the number of God's elect ones." This clerical authority rests

* "Moeurs des Chrétiens," 4, 9.

† The Abbé Curcique, from whom these words are quoted ("Voix Prophetiques," 3rd ed., 1871), surpasses Dr. Cumming in the faculty of prediction, and altogether eclipses him in his love of the marvellous. The full title of his book, containing 1300 pages, describes the work, but can give an Englishman not the faintest conception of the innumerable "lying wonders" with which it is crammed. The title runs in English thus: "Prophetic Voices, or Modern Signs, Apparitions, and Predictions touching the Great Events of Christendom in the Nineteenth Century and toward

what he says on the authority of the Archbishop of Malines, and on the much more imposing authority of a soul in purgatory, who, leaving the lower regions, returned to this wicked world of ours, to impress on its inhabitants the fact that the abuse in question is the cause of the misfortunes of that country in which it is, to say the truth, but too common. The same position has been supported by the Abbé Richardeau ("La Prophétie de Blois," 4th edit., 106), and by Father Monsabré in his funeral sermon of Châteaudun, 18th Oct., 1871. To the same cause popular preachers and eminent prelates also have ascribed the terrible disasters which not long since overwhelmed France. Yet their assumptions cannot be justified. For the Church glorifies celibacy as the purest state, the most suitable for preparing you for entrance into the celestial kingdom, and it tolerates marriage simply as a troublesome necessity. It makes continence a law with its priests, its monks, and its nuns—the pink of society. Consequently it does not impose on any one the duty of propagating the human race. Still more, it extols a great number of saints, who, immediately after the celebration of their marriage, agree with their wives to live in a state of total abstinence, as brother and sister.* Saint Alexis did not even take the trouble of asking his wife's consent. Immediately after the nuptial ceremony he disappeared without informing any one, and went to bury himself in seclusion, where, all at his ease, he engaged in self-mortification and contemplation. Long after, he, in the quality of a beggar, returned to his father's house, to whom he made himself known only at the moment of his death, and troubled himself about his wife no more than if she had

the approach of the End of Time." This mass of ecclesiastical rubbish, intended to promote the restoration of the Bourbons, the last hope of the pope in regard to his temporal power, has in four years reached a fifth edition, and manifests the existence in France of a state of mind so grossly superstitious as to almost make one despair of any healthful and permanent state of society there. He who doubts whether Romanism is a curse to a country will be assuredly led to that painful conclusion by reading this heap of clerical trumpery and deceit. And yet its value and importance are attested by four French bishops.—*Translator.*

* See specially the life of Saint Abraham Godescard, "Vie des Saints," ii, 617; and "Vie de la beehereuse Jeanne-Marie de Maillé," by the Canons Bourassé and Janvier, bearing the approbation of the Archbishop of Tours, 1872, 25-27.

never existed. Saint Ethelred married successively two princes, but the marriages were never consummated, notwithstanding persistent importunities. In order to carry her intention into effect, she had to flee from home, and to endure conflicts, in which, the authorities declare, she was protected by the miraculous assistance of Providence.* Not only the Church does not reproach these pious persons with not having contributed to "the number of the elect," but she greatly praises their conduct, and sets them forth for our imitation and admiration. There is then, on its part, an enormous inconsistency when it scolds husband and wife on the few children they give birth to. As to increasing the number of the elect, this is a task which it would be equally futile and rash to undertake, for the Church knows that, while there are many called, there are few that are chosen (Matt. xx. 16), whence it deduces the doctrine that the immense majority of human beings are destined to damnation: consequently, in augmenting the number of human beings, you work for the devil more than for God, and a Catholic, far from desiring the multiplication of men, women, and children, ought to pray for their reduction and even extirpation. However, the clergy are inflexible on this article. Bouvier, entering into the subject in numerous particulars, has enumerated whatever may obstruct generation.† He has encountered opposition on the part of parish priests, who set before him that in rigorously requiring the application of his principles he offends pious persons, who threaten even to renounce confession if so severe a law continued to be imposed. Bouvier went three times to Rome to negotiate on the matter with the pope and the cardinals. On his return he persisted in his requirements, and it is the same in all dioceses. Consequently it frequently happens that a confessor asks a wife how long it is since she had a baby; he wants to know why she has not had another; whether the delay is owing to a known or unknown cause, or to a premeditated calculation concerted between her and her husband, or, finally, to steps taken by the latter. Then

* Montalembert, "Les Moines de l'Occident," iv., 242.

† "Tractatus de Sexto et Nono Decalogi Præceptis," 14th edit., pp. 137, 160, 185.

the penitent is obliged to explain every thing. And, if her replies are not satisfactory, she is reprimanded by the priest, who traces to her the rule she is to follow, and gives her directions as to her compliance or non-compliance with her husband's wishes. The husband finds in his wife such a change that he asks her for the reason, and the explanation cannot do aught else than augment his discontent. How many husbands, repelled by the bigotry of their wives, have at last become disgusted with the objects of their earliest and purest affections! Independently of the cases of conscience of which we have spoken, it too often happens that the wife who goes to confession often becomes smitten with a kind of fanatical enthusiasm for her confessor. She delights in every one of his words, yea, the most inconsiderable; she feels for him admiration and love, which may remain Platonic, but may also absorb her whole soul. When she is not near this adorable confessor she seems to suffer under an exile; she has no thought, no heart for anything or anybody but him. Consequently she is cold and formal to her husband and children, to whom she renders only obligatory cares and attentions. Her husband thinks that he possesses his wife, whereas he possesses only her body. Her soul belongs to another, who reigns in it without a partner. It belongs to the man in black, who, though invisible in the home, domineers there as its absolute master. Then there is only the shadow of a marriage, and the two heads of the family are really in a state of divorce, for they belong to two different worlds. The husband occupies himself with worldly things—with his children's future, with municipal affairs, with the good of his country; he cultivates letters, the sciences, the arts and manufactures; he promotes political and social progress; he makes himself familiar with the current of the intellectual movement. His devout partner lives only for heaven, she is weary of and disgusted with "this vale of tears." She is absorbed in "care of her soul;" she takes a vivid interest in the affairs of religion, she hears only the voice of the Church, whose loves and hates she makes her own. Consequently she has a horror of all "free-thinkers," for all who wish to reform her Church—all, and not least, "the Freemasons"—all whom the pope has anathematised.

And if her husband, if her sons belong to any of these categories, or give them countenance or support, how can she help seeing in them enemies as of the Church so of herself. She is indignant at seeing the liberal journals in her house, any book condemned by ecclesiastical censure. It is a last grief for her to have to listen to conversations in which her husband and perhaps his friends speak freely of the popular religion and its ministers. That husband, who at last never goes to mass, who never sets foot in a church, who thus voluntarily closes the gates of heaven against himself, becomes in her eyes a reprobate. A good father he may be, a kind and indulgent husband he is, but he is also "a heretic," he is disowned by the Church, implicitly if not expressly—how can she love him? And if some relic of old affection lingers in her bosom, what can it do better than lead her to attempt his conversion? She will implore the aid of her confessor. He does her bidding, and is shown to the door. The insult is intolerable. Shall she submit to the caresses of such a man or leave her home? Any way she has her comfort. Her beloved confessor is kindness itself. The result need not be particularised.

The case is a possible one, nay, actual, though not frequent.

Most families escape from the danger in its worst features and effects without, however, being subjected to constant and vexatious annoyances. A confessor in a house is one too many. The magnitude of the evil depends on the zeal of the wife. If she has in her a spice of fanaticism, the mischief is manifold and constant. If, as is mostly the case, she is outwardly a Catholic and inwardly a mother, it is slight. But when the wife takes seriously the lessons she received in her childhood, beginning with what is termed her "first communion," if, according to her light, or rather her darkness, she is really religious, she is sure to be a prey to the priest. Then rarely, if ever, is she wife or mother, but the serf and the tool of her confessor. We subjoin a remarkable example of the way in which Catholic superstition destroys natural affection, and that too meritoriously: Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, becoming a widow, withdrew into seclusion, where she lived under the direction of her confessor, Father Conrad.

From time to time she received visits from her son. But, led to the belief that those visits interfered with her pious exercises, she at last forbid him to come again. After having formed this heroic resolution, she went to her confessor radiant with joy, and said, "My father, I have made great progress. No longer do I love any human being, I love God alone." *

One cannot treat of the relations of wife and confessor without recalling the admirable picture painted by Paul-Louis Courier. We present the great writer's ideas: "What a life, what a condition is that of our priests! Love and marriage are forbidden them, and yet women are put under their control; they may not love one, yet live with all; familiarly, comparatively a small matter, but intimately, in confidence, in secrecy, both as to their thoughts and their actions. The innocent and unsuspecting girl lives under her mother's wing, and there learns the influence of the priest with her parent; by whom she is soon put under the same authority, who converses with her alone, and before she is able to sin, † mentions to her the most fatal sin of all. Instructed, she is married by him; married, she is confessed by him; confessed by him, she is in his hands after as well as before her marriage, and there she remains permanently. What she dares not confide to her mother or avow to her husband she makes known to her confessor, and that as passing from her mouth to his ear in the confessional and what she whispers to him must comprise her failings, her sins, her desires, her weaknesses, her passions, accompanied by the sobs, the sighs, the tears of a girl of sixteen, who thus tells a man of five and twenty what she is ashamed to think of, much more to put into words. If this is not wickedness it is torture. To confess a girl! Can you imagine what it really is? It may be a woman—no matter. In the more retired parts of the church stands a kind of large box or turret, in which is a priest, he may be young, he may be old, he may be pure of life, he may be impure, he may be pious,

* Montalembert, "Histoire de Sainte Elizabeth."

† Nine years of age is fixed by the highest authorities, but six is pleaded for, four mentioned by others. See "La Confesseur de l'Enfance," par L. J. M. Cross, de la Compagnie de Jesus; and yet among the questions to be put is this one: S'il a commis quelque indecence?—*Translator.*

he may be impious, any way he is a confessor, he is the confessor of this village, and before him, in that narrow secrecy, every girl from early age must from time to time appear to make a clean breast of it, and, when the appointed penance has been performed, to receive from him absolution. The appearances are monthly, weekly, or every day. The confessor therefore holds in his hands the strings of her life. He knows her better than she is known to her father, mother, nay, herself. Knowing her, he knows her family. He knows even her neighbours. Indeed he knows the whole village. Knowing everybody, he can check one person's confession by another's, and so obtain complete control over all. Possessed of that control, he can bend to his will whom he pleases. Then he lifts the latch of every door. He has seen a young female with whose beauty he was struck. The cottage of which she is an inmate is proud to receive the priest. There he spends his evenings, and there he forms such an affection for the girl as would, were he free, induce him to offer her marriage. This his tonsure forbids. But it cannot prevent him from exchanging with her glances and sighs. A new relation intervenes. The girl, one wintry evening after vespers, goes to confession, and——. Do not think that I invent. This same takes place in all France; every day it is renewed by forty thousand young priests with as many young women whom they love because they are men; confess in secrecy, discourse together, visit because they are priests, and do not marry because the pope forbids. The pope who forgives them everything but wedlock, preferring an impure, debauched, adulterous priest, even an assassin, like Maingrat,* to a married one. Reflect then and say whether it is possible to unite in the same person things more contrary, more incompatible, more mutually destructive than the vow of chastity and the office of confessor." What service could be greater than to break the chains which keep the priest from lawful wedlock?

* Maingrat, a parish priest in the vicinity of Grenoble, drew to his house a married woman, whose confessor he was, violated her, then, to avoid the legal consequences, cut her body into pieces, and threw them into the river Isère. Finding himself threatened, he took to flight, and was condemned by the Assize Court of Isère on the 9th of December, 1822.

DEMORALISATION BY CONFESSION.

CONFESSION offers priests a very great facility for seducing their penitents. The ecclesiastical annals prove that this institution, intended to purify and amend the sinful, has been constantly a source of corruption. Religious authorities themselves establish the fact incontestably. Pope Paul IV., on the 18th day of January, 1556, addressed to the inquisitors of Granada a letter, in which he said that he had learnt that a certain number of confessors abused their ministry to the extent of soliciting females to sin in the cabinet of penitence. In consequence, he ordered those inquisitors to prosecute the priests whom the public voice accused of so great a crime, and to pardon no one. The inquisitors having communicated the letter of Paul IV. to the Archbishop of Granada, the latter wrote to them that, under the circumstances, the publication of the "bull" might produce inconvenience, if it was made in the ordinary forms, and that it was desirable to act with prudence. Consequently the archbishop convoked the parish priests and other ecclesiastics, while the inquisitors did the same with the heads of the different monasteries; and it was enjoined on both to notify the pope's letter to all the confessors, and to recommend them to conduct themselves with great prudence in future, and not to give to the people any knowledge of the pope's bull for fear that many persons should renounce confession. Information was at the same time gained respecting the priests and the monks who had rendered themselves suspected by their conduct, and they discovered among the latter some culprits whom they satisfied themselves with punishing secretly, in order to avoid scandal.* The discoveries that took place proved to

* Canon Llorente, "Histoire Critique de l'Inquisition et d'Espagne," Paris, 1818. 4 Vols., 8vo. Lasteurie, 166, seg.

the pope that the abuse in question was not confined to the kingdom of Granada, and that it was urgent to subject all the other provinces of the kingdom to the same law. He, therefore, on the 16th of April, 1651, addressed to the grand inquisitor Valdez a bull, by which he authorised him to proceed against the confessors of the kingdom and of the dominions of Philip II., who had committed the crime of seduction, *as if they were guilty of heresy.** The measures taken not appearing sufficient to remedy the evil, Pious IV. sent a new bull in 1564, which was followed successively by several others, in order to extirpate an evil which had struck deep roots into the soil, not only in Spain, but in the whole of Christendom, since one of these bulls contains these terms: "In those dastard Spanish provinces and in all the regions of the globe where the faith of Jesus Christ extends." An edict published at Seville in 1563 gave occasion to so great a number of denunciations, that the police of the Holy Office (the Inquisition) was not sufficient to receive them. This led to the appointment of a term of thirty days, during which each accusing woman might present herself a second time. As this delay was followed by several others, there was required not less than one hundred and twenty days in which to receive all the accusations. But the inquisitors, frightened by the large number of criminals and the scandal which ensued, gave up the undertaking and let the delinquents go free. In effect, among that great number of women there were persons of high position and of illustrious birth. Blushing at what had taken place, the inculpatated women disguised themselves and covered their heads to go before the inquisitors, who occupied the castle of Triana, under the fear of being met and recognised by their husbands. Notwithstanding these precautions, several of the latter got to know what was going on, and great trouble ensued. The steps taken to put an end to these guilty proceedings on the part of the confessors having produced no effect, the Council of the Holy Office issued new orders in 1576 in order to call forth denunciations. The popes also published successively, during the years 1614, 1622, &c., bulls and decrees, the last of

* Heresy, all crimes in one, surpasses even seduction and murder.—
Translator.

which presents the following words: "You will declare if you know that any confessor, priest, or monk, no matter what his rank, in the act of hearing confession, immediately before or after, whether under favour or under pretext of confession, in the confessional or in any other place, solicited or attempted to solicit women by inducing or tempting them to shameful acts, whether with himself or *with other persons*, or had with them unlawful and scandalous commerce; and we exhort the confessors, and command them to warn all those their female penitents who have been so solicited of the obligation incumbent upon them to denounce the aforesaid tempters and seducers to the Holy Office, to which cognisance of this kind of crimes belongs." The employment of the words *with other persons* shows that there were priests vile enough to act as procureurs, and to corrupt women for the sake of gain.

Pope Pius IV., on the 16th of April, 1561, published a bull by which he authorised the Inquisition to seek out and punish the priests or the monks who, in confession, seduced their penitents. It appears that the crime was frequent in Spain, since the pope in his bull says that he has lately learned that there are in Spain several priests, charged with the cure of souls, who abuse the sacrament of penitence in confession by seducing their penitents. The prisons of the Inquisition could not suppress the crime. Clement VIII., thirty years later, thought it his duty to command the Inquisition to proceed against those priests, whether secular or regular, who solicited women to crime. But the authority of two popes not having obtained better results than the Council's, or the rigours of the Inquisition, a third pope, Gregory XV., in 1612 drew up a set of laws more detailed and more exact to put an end to this kind of immorality. Not only did he confirm the bull of Pius IV., but he orders its universal application throughout Christendom, and he charges the Inquisition to punish very severely every priest who by any means, or in any place where confession was made, should tempt women or other persons to acts contrary to modesty (Llorente). Llorente reports a judgment pronounced on a Capucin who had, in Spanish America, discharged the functions of apostolic missionary and provincial

guardian father. He perverted a whole house of Beguines (a species of nuns), and of sixteen females that composed the community he seduced thirteen. With each of them he pretended that he had had a special revelation from Jesus Christ, who authorised him to give himself up to the pleasures of the senses. It was said to him that it was incredible that Jesus Christ should appear to him and set him free from one of the precepts of the Decalogue, which are permanently binding. He replied that such was also the fifth, which prohibits homicide, and that God dispensed Abraham from it in commanding him to immolate his son; that as much may be said of the seventh, which forbids robbery, since God had permitted the Hebrews to carry off the gold and silver vases of the Egyptians (Exod. xi. xii.). Then it was said to him that it was very singular that God had authorised him to lie with thirteen young and beautiful women, and not at all old and plain ones. He replied with assurance by the passage of Scripture: "The spirit bloweth where it listeth" (John iii. 8). At a later time he retracted, and admitted that his revelations were lies. He was condemned to be imprisoned for five years in a convent of his order, to forfeit for ever the power to confess and to preach, and to endure many penances accompanied by a rigorous fast. He was, besides, cudgelled by the hands of the monks and lay brethren of the convent, in presence of the secretary of the Inquisition. That ecclesiastical tribunal, so severe against heresy and blasphemy, was very indulgent in regard to crimes committed by members of the clergy. "It left unpunished a prodigious number of infanticides committed by the monks and nuns of Carella, and whose existence had been juridically established. There were more than twenty abortions and more than thirty murders committed on born infants, many of whom were not baptised. Other tribunals would not have failed to send to the scaffold all the persons convicted of these horrible crimes, and yet the Holy Office chose such an occasion for manifesting its clemency."* In Tuscany, the abuse of which we speak was detected and exposed in numerous documents collected under the government of the Grand Duke Leopold, and which, preserved in the hands of the family of Ricci,

* Llorente iv., 33 seq.

were communicated by it to De Potter, who reproduced them in a work entitled "Vie de Scipion de Ricci, évêque de Pistoie et de Prato ; Bruxelles, 3 vols., 8vo."* The libertinism introduced into the nunneries of Tuscany goes back to a day far anterior to the reign of Leopold (1747-1792). At that time for more than a century and a half the moral laxity of the Dominicans had called forth blame and murmurs from the public. The spiritual direction which the monks pursued in regard to the nuns was a source of scandal, supported and fomented by interest, dissipation, and libertinism. Among other documents brought to light was one addressed to the Grand Duke, signed by the Gonfalonier and other personages of Pistoja to the number of 194. It contained a request for a speedy and effectual remedy of the indecent conduct pursued by the monks in the convent of Saint Catharina and Saint Lucia. The affair was hushed up without any retributory measures, in order not to compromise the first families of the nobility, to whom the nuns belonged. This kind of disorder reaching excess under Leopold, was ascertained by means of investigations ordered by that prince, according to the denunciation made by two nuns of the convent of Saint Catharina and Pistoja, who begged him to remove them from the execrable principles professed by those monks, their confessors.

Then it came to light that the monks ate and drank with the nuns, that they slept with such as they preferred in their private cells. Most of the young women deprived themselves of all their money and all their goods, and stript themselves even of what was necessary to them for life, in order to enrich their lovers. "I advance nothing," says Ricci, "of which I have not proofs." It also became clear that the monks were accustomed to sleep in the nuns' dormitory, and that the practice had long been observed by the priors and the confessors of the nuns. The inquiry ordered by Leopold made the scandal public by forcing several persons to disclose the most infamous iniquities authorised by the confessors and the superiors of the

* Translated into English in Thomas Roscoe's "Memoirs of Scipio de Ricci, Reformer of Catholicism, &c." Lond., 1829.—*Translator.*

Dominicans. Leopold had all the nuns examined by the head of the police, and, under pain of imprisonment, forbade the monks to approach the monasteries, on account of the depraved conduct of those who filled the offices of priors and confessors. It was discovered that the corruption had been propagated by the monks into the nunneries of Florence, Prato, Pisa, Sienna, Faenza, &c. This investigation brought to light facts monstrously immoral, and in which devotion served to authorise all kinds of debauchery. Thus, a nun declared that Sister Buonamici had said to her, in order to lead her astray and under the pretence of aiding her to spiritual perfection, that she had had commerce with Jesus Christ as a man, that she had drunk milk supplied by the breast of the Holy Virgin, and that she had enjoyed the delights of paradise. The Mother Dragoni declared that she had been solicited to commit indecent acts by the Sisters Buonamici and Spieggi; that the former had presented herself before her to procure the means of uniting herself with God, that she had at the same time declared that those means were carnal copulation, and she had indicated to her, as being fitted to assist in that deed, the confessor, who was Father Gamberani, because a priest was necessary for the consummation of the union. Sister Buonamici confessed that she had taught the nuns that the unchaste acts for which she prepared them were virtuous, and fitted to carry the aspirant forward on the road to perfection. One of the means that the monks took to deprave these unhappy women was the reading and the interpretation of those mystic books which are usually perused in the convents, in order, to produce fanaticism. It is found in a letter of one Abbé Menzoni that two nuns turned to a bad account the works of Saint Jean de la Croix, and other works of mystic theology, to lead to sin the nuns, their companions, the novices and boarders. These corrupters passed from the readings to conversations artfully introduced, whether in confession or in visits, gently advancing to the most licentious ideas, so as to prepare the way for libertine practices the most criminal.

In France, different councils, held in the twelfth century, pronounced penalties against priests who kept concubines.

In vain were efforts made to abolish a custom which had long subsisted, and which took the place of legal wedlock. During the life of Cardinal-Legate, Jacques de Vitri, as is reported in the "Antiquities de Paris," the priests kept concubines, and, even on leaving their beds, had no scruple to go forthwith and say mass. To apply an effectual remedy to this custom, which did not cease to exist, toward the end of the thirteenth century canons were made which required confessors to disclose the sins and the names of the priests who kept concubines. This custom was established in Spain as in other parts of Christendom, as is seen in one of the articles of the council held at Toledo in 1302: "As some ecclesiastics, as indifferent for their honour as for their salvation, pass their lives in the most enormous licentiousness," &c.

On the 13th of June, Charles the Bald convoked a council at Douay, in which proceedings were taken against a priest named Huntberg, accused of having had commerce with an abbess named Donda. The council refused credence to the denials and even the oath of the accused. His culpability was proved by letters which he had written, and by the testimony of nuns, accomplices of Donda. He was, in consequence, punished, but secretly, so as to avoid scandal.* Nicholas Clemagis, secretary of Pope Benedict XIII., who wrote about 1430, does not give a favourable idea of the chastity of the clergy of his day, when he says that the bishops of France permitted the parish priests, in consideration of a payment, to keep concubines. "Thus prepared," he adds, "and after enjoying the embraces of their mistresses, they present themselves at the altar." Clemagis paints a deplorable picture of the disorderly and licentious conduct of all orders of the Church. Canons publicly bring up the children of the courtezans and concubines which they keep as if their wives. He calls the monks devouring wolves, who, after cramming themselves with wine and victuals, with the women who are not their wives, and with children which belong to them, exhaust all kinds of licentiousness to extinguish the fire of the lust by which they are devoured. The nunneries he describes thus: "The monasteries of the nuns are no longer sanctuaries dedicated to the Deity, but

* Concilia Gallica, xiii., 414.

execrable houses of debauchery, retreats for young immodest libertines, who seek only to satisfy their licentious desires. No longer is there now a difference between taking the veil and being a public prostitute."* The trial of Elizabeth Bavent, a nun in the convent of Saint Louis de Louviers, revealed a mass of overwhelming facts, and showed to what an incredible degree debauchery was carried among the clergy. It results from the testimony that there reigned in that nunnery unbounded licentiousness. The almoner Picard made use of confession to corrupt the nuns, who became his accomplices, and aided him to pervert the new recruits. His successor, David, surpassed even these excesses; he said, for example, that "sin must be killed by sin, if we are to return to innocence, and resemble our first parents, who, before their fall, were unashamed of their nakedness." He introduced all the refinements of lust, to which he added magical and sacrilegious practices. A decree of the parliament of Rouen, dated 21st of August, 1647, came to a determination against Picard, although dead, and against Boullé, his vicar, declaring them guilty of magic; ordering the corpse of Picard to be exhumed, dragged on a hurdle, and burned; and ordering also that Boullé, after being subjected to torture, should reveal his accomplices, and, after making the *amende honorable*, be burnt alive; and that their ashes should be tossed to the winds.† In the eighteenth century another trial produced a frightful scandal; it is that of Marie-Catherine Cadière, and of Father Gerard, a Jesuit. That priest got hold of her mind, infused into her unbounded confidence, employed all kinds of trickery in order to pass her off as a saint, having the gift of miracles. He by degrees brought her to licentious acts, in assuring her that they were means for her arriving at perfection; he made her his mistress, and having got her with child, induced her to take a draught to produce abortion. She expresses her griefs in this way: "Unhappily I experienced that when libertinism is clad with the externals of piety, and we are led to impurity by the principles of religion, the fund of corruption which comes to us from

* Lasteyrie, English translation, ii., 34.

† Garnet, "Histoire de la Magie en France," p. 227, seq.

Adam brings only too soon blindness into the mind, and surrenders us to the most disgraceful passions without scruple and without remorse. The externalities of piety made me consider as permitted and indifferent what, if presented to me in its true light, would not have failed to terrify me." The trial lasted for a very long time, and absorbed public attention. The Jesuits did their utmost to rescue Gerard from the vengeance of the law. At last, on the 11th of September, 1713, the parliament of Aix gave its verdict: there were twelve voices for burning the priest alive, seven for acquitting him, one for interdiction, and one for referring him to the bar of the Church. He was acquitted, the majority not being sufficiently large to justify a condemnation.* In the registers of the parliament of Paris we find that the priest of Saint Sauveur, namely, De Peronne, having been convicted of criminal conversation with a nun, his penitent, was, on the 12th of June, 1707, condemned to nine years' banishment. The 31st of January, 1660, the parliament of Grenoble condemned a priest to be hanged and then burned for having abused the sacrament of penitence, and for having put his hands on the breast and on other parts of a crowd of penitents during the time when he confessed them. By a decree of the 22nd of June, 1673, the parliament of Paris condemned a director (confessor) of nuns, for seduction and carnal connection with them, to make the *amende honorable* before Notre Dame, to be hanged in the square Maubert, and to be burned together with the account of his trial. The same parliament, on the 6th of March, 1714, pronounced a decree conveying the penalty of death against a parish priest of the diocese of Bourges, for having seduced, in confession, several of his female parishioners, and for having outraged their modesty. In 1673, by a sovereign judgment pronounced by the provincial council of Artois, on the 21st of December, Nicolas Béguet, parish priest of Saint Paul's, convicted of having had incestuous commerce with one of his female parishioners and his penitents, was condemned to the *amende honorable*, with a torch in his hand, and to perpetual banishment, for incestuous lechery, and for having made false entries in the baptismal

* Garinet, 257.

registers. A great number of ecclesiastical authors have, at different times, raised their voices against the abuses of confession. Father Escobar del Corro declares,* among numerous facts of this kind, that he knew a confessor who had sacrilegious commerce with three virgin girls, and with their mother, after having seduced them in the tribunal of penitence (the confessional). "One has frequently seen," says the same author, "in calamitous periods, the holy sanctuary where the remission of sins is given defiled by obscenities—a fact which ought to make us fear the celestial vengeance of the Lord against his ministers" (part i., col. 1). He adds that frequently you see the priests confess penitents and celebrate the mass, and at the same time behave licentiously and give themselves up to criminal acts of the flesh (ii., 2). Erasmus says that a theologian had reported to him that he had heard a priest, the confessor of a nunnery, boast of having corrupted two hundred virgins, and that this theologian justified himself in his bad conduct by that example.† "Often," says the same author, "the penitents fall into the hands of priests who, under the cover of confession, commit acts which it is not becoming to mention; those who ought to correct morals become the associates, the masters, and the disciples of debauchery. Would to God that my warnings were groundless, and that there did not exist in every place so great a number of examples of those disorders of which I speak only with grief, and which I could not describe without blushing."‡ These crimes, being the inevitable result of the practice of auricular confession, have never ceased to reproduce themselves. The guilt of Maingrat, Centrafatto,§ Molitor,¶ are not forgotten. In recent times, if we possess not, as in the past, evidences similar to those which we have cited, the reason is that the laws and the means of suppression are changed. On one side, modern civil law no longer considers the seduction of penitents by their confessors as a legally punishable crime, though in the olden time it was qualified as spiritual incest

* Escobar, "Tractatus de Confessoribus," 1642.

† Erasmi, "Exomologia Seu Modus Confitendi, 154. ‡ 129.

§ Attempts on children: Cour d'Assises de la Seine, 15th Oct., 1827.

¶ Violation: Cour d'Assises de Seine-et-Oise, 22nd Aug., 1827.

and sacrilege, and punished with death. It follows that magistrates have no longer to search for this kind of transgression, which now is answered to the inner tribunal, and can originate no juridical investigation, except there are connected with the misdeed aggravating circumstances, such as violence and attempts on minors, &c. On the other side, the clergy become more prudent, keep from the public ear these scandalous affairs, and the bishops, when informed of the misconduct of their priests, are satisfied with citing them before themselves, with reprimanding them in secrecy, or inflicting on them discipline or change of employment, or, in the worst cases, suspense from officiating. Anyway, they take all possible precautions to keep from the public a knowledge of facts such as to bring their whole caste into disrepute. Finally, when the question is of crimes foreseen and punished by the civil law, the clergy spare no pains to paralyse the action of justice. Thus, in the case of Maingrat, which excited general indignation, they spared no pains to stifle the affair; the high vicar Bochard expressly preached a sermon on rash judgments. "Take care, my brethren," he said; "a person may seem to you guilty who by his duty is bound, should it cost him his honour and life, to conceal another's crime; and malice is so great that, to exculpate self, it does not hesitate to calumniate the best people." Thereby he insinuated that the husband was the real murderer, and that the priest was a martyr to the secrecy of confession. The judicial investigation proved beyond a doubt the culpability of the confessor. I subjoin a striking example of the means which the clergy employ to save their members from the civil jurisdiction, and to hush up compromising discussions. The city of Maintenon (Eure-et-Loire) had for parish priest a person named Hatey. Several fathers learnt that this priest attracted to his house boys whom he prepared for their first communion. There he used to them language the most obscene, gave them lessons in immorality, and committed upon them the foulest of crimes. The parents complained to the bishop, who paid no attention to their remonstrances. The number of these violations being multiplied, several honourable citizens, seeing that they had nothing to expect from the religious authority, set forth their

grievances to the mayor. That magistrate went to the bishop, and assured him that the information collected touching the conduct of the priest was detestable; nevertheless, he finished by asking for a change of residence, promising that on that condition the affair should be abandoned. It was, as the reader sees, a compromise, in which public justice and moral interests were sold at a very small price. But the bishop was inflexible, saying that the priest was the victim of calumny, and that he would not consent to sacrifice him. Hatey, thinking then that he was sure of impunity, continued his infamous conduct. Moreover, thinking it desirable to make sure of the good graces of his superiors, he determined to establish a company of brethren at Maintenon. In order to succeed he must first destroy the lay school. For this purpose he denounced the communal instructor to the academy's inspector as a man that corrupted youth; and, in support of his denunciation, he put in a number of obscene songs, which he declared were repeated in the classes. The inspector came to the spot, and made an investigation. He acquired proof that the teacher was irreproachable; that his morals were excellent, and that the discipline of his school left nothing to be desired. The songs had been written by some of his scholars, but it was the priest that had exacted them from the boys in the private conversations he had had with them, under pretext of confession and in supplementary lessons of the Catechism. The priest, then, had odiously calumniated the schoolmaster, by accusing him of abominations of which he alone was culpable. The inspector was astounded at these discoveries. But his duty obliged him to do justice to the denounced teacher, and to communicate the result of his investigation to the proper authorities. In presence of disclosures so overwhelming, prosecution became inevitable. Hatey was arrested, and subjected to a minute scrutiny. Then he was brought before the Court of Assize, when the debates lasted eight days with closed doors. Two ecclesiastics, a grand vicar, and a secretary of the bishopric attended the trial, and so were in a condition to furnish the most exact information to the bishop. Hatey, pronounced guilty of culpable attacks on the purity of numerous minors entrusted to his care and placed under his authority, was con-

demned to ten years' imprisonment (March, 1867). In spite of this judgment the clergy would not submit. Hatey was not suspended from his sacerdotal functions; he said mass in prison, and was painted by his brother priests as a martyr to calumny, and there is no reason why, at the expiration of his punishment, he should not be entrusted with a new care of souls!

VI.

ALLEGED ADVANTAGES OF CONFESSION.

To justify the use of confession it has been said that it was a salutary bridle which kept man from doing evil, that it compelled him to lay his conscience bare from time to time, and that the general tendency was to lead him to do nothing of which he should be ashamed before his clerical judge. The penitent, it is further said, finds in the priest a guide who leads him through the storms of this world, preserves him from its rocks, and safely steers him to the port of salvation; the guilty not being able to obtain absolution except by repentance and on condition of amendment, is forced to renounce every act of injustice, every illicit gain, every immoral practice, and to advance steadily on to perfection. This is the favourable side of confession. But individuals on whom it produces these happy effects are precisely those who would be in a condition to reach the same result, either by their own strength or by the counsels and with the aid of an enlightened and affectionate friend, to whom they voluntarily submitted the state of their conscience. By the institution of confession, then, they are nothing more than they would be without it. But if, putting aside these superior characters, we study the common sort of people, we see that confession is only a routine, to which they submit without drawing therefrom any advantage; they experience, indeed, at first a certain dislike to unveil their misdeeds to the eyes of the priests, but habit soon makes the exercise familiar to them; far from endeavouring to become better, so as not to have to make humiliating avowals, they make it a kind of play to sully their conscience, assured that they can wash themselves clean at any time; they lose the horror of vicè

while thinking of the extreme ease with which they can obtain absolution ; like a sick man who, barely cured, cares little for relapses, because he always has the remedy in his hands.

Accordingly, in Catholic countries, you see how little confession benefits those who most have recourse to it ; such as labour under vicious habits cleave to them despite their frequent use of the sacraments. At the moment of committing a bad action they say to themselves, " I shall confess, and receive absolution." With this prospect before them they have no need to deny themselves any gratification : they may at their ease give free course to their vicious inclinations, and give themselves up to all excesses.

Louis XI., before committing his crimes, asked forgiveness from his good little Virgin made of lead, promised her some splendid gift, then went to confess and get absolution, quite ready to begin again. Louis XV. was certainly one of the most devout of men ; not for the world would he fail in the usual offices or eat flesh on fast days ; he regularly attended the sacraments. He manifested a warm interest in religious matters, and watched over the execution of the murderous edicts he issued against his Protestant subjects. Nevertheless, he gave himself up to the vilest debauchery : he had in his *Parc-aux-cerfs* a kind of harem in the country, into which procureurs brought young women, for the most part carried off from their families ; they were destined to minister to his lusts. All this the pious prince accused himself off in confession, and none the more discontinued his kind of life, thus allying devotion carried to bigotry and persecution with unbounded licentiousness.

In Italy and Spain, countries impregnated with Catholicism, the women punctually observe the requirements of the Church, and specially confession, yet nowhere are morals so relaxed ; there are, quite as much as elsewhere, commercial frauds, quarrels, assaults—in a word, misdeeds of all kinds. But the prostitutes are devout, and attend the sacraments. Even highwaymen go to confession from time to time.

Some years ago took place the trial of a famous brigand chief named Cipriano la Gala, who had committed the most frightful crimes—robbery with force, pillage, conflagrations, violation of women, assassination. He had put prisoners to

the torture, had starved them to death, and eaten of their flesh. Now, this man was devout, he wore on his person a crowd of chaplets, scapularies, and medals that had been blessed by the priest. He meant to serve the cause of the throne and the altar in his own way, and he confessed in prison. Doubtless he received absolution, and none but "a free thinker" can deny that the confession was valid and was his passport to heaven!!

The clergy do not cease to declare that, without confession, everything would be lost; that there would no longer be either honesty or good manners; and that each would unrestrainedly give himself up to the impulses of a corrupt nature. The only answer required is a reference to Protestant nations, which are not more corrupt than the Catholic. England, Northern Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, may well sustain a comparison with the States of the South of Europe. It is also alleged that confession is necessary in order that those who have committed serious misdeeds may recover peace of mind, and have an assured means of knowing that they have re-entered into the favour of God. But never have men lacked those advantages. Before Christ nearly all nations, the people of Israel included, knew nothing of the use of confession, and such is the state of the majority of Christians still. He who sincerely repents of his sins, and labours earnestly to correct them, acquires a moral excellence of which the testimony of his conscience is a sure guarantee. If, however, he doubts the efficacy of his reconciliation to God, he may always open his mind to a virtuous and experienced person, and follow his disinterested and sage advice.

Voluntary confession would have all the advantages of sacramental confession, without being burdened with its disadvantages. This free and spontaneous consultation of a friend, taking place only on grave questions on the part of one who feels its desirableness, would be salutary in being corrective and strengthening, and the words of the adviser would pour comfort and hope into the heart of the penitent; while the routine and periodical enumeration of the same transgressions, made mechanically to a priest, not from choice nor in obedience to a felt want, but from habit or fear of

hell, leaves the penitent in the same unhappy condition, and is to him only a wearisome drudgery to which he submits under restraint. The voluntary confitent is not an official judge who pronounces sentence in virtue of an imaginary right, but a friend who has studied the human heart and long reflected on its duties and capabilities, and when he declares to him by whom he is consulted that his repentance, his efforts, his success, have fulfilled God's conditions of pardon, the penitent with good reason feels himself consoled in feeling himself brought into childlike relations with his Creator; he may now consider himself as recovered from his malady, and, being encouraged thereby, he will be led to make fresh efforts with fresh vigour, and so will his feet be firmly set in the way of God. How superior a condition this to that which has arisen by a compulsory utterance of a few words of form, and, of course, at the knees of a priest.

We shall terminate this chapter by the citation of that remarkable passage of a grave and learned doctor, the Abbé Fleury, who, in attacking only the abuses of confession, in reality strikes a deadly blow on the institution itself:

“The sinner knows what he wants as well as what is before him. He is told that he has sinned, and that he must confess. Confession puts all to rights. Nor is confession difficult. Practice assures him that if he sins every day, he may be freed from the consequences of his sin by confession.

“Now this facility seems necessary in the countries where the Inquisition is active, and where the habitual sinner who does not correct himself dares not to abstain from confession lest he should be denounced, excommunicated, and, at the end of a year, declared suspected of heresy, and, as such, prosecuted at law;* accordingly, it is in those countries that the most relaxed casuists have lived. This facility of absolution annihilated sin in some way, since it took from it its horror, and caused it to be regarded as an ordinary and inevitable disorder. Would fever be feared if men could be

* This fact shows the reader what liberty, even in the last century, was enjoyed in lands where the clerical spirit bore sway; the citizens were obliged to observe the sacraments under pain of judicial prosecutions which might entail terrible consequences.

cured by swallowing a glass of water? Would robbery or murder be feared if men could be acquitted by washing their hands? Confession is almost as easy as this, when all you have to do is to utter a few words in a priest's ear, and secretly to make him a present, without fearing delay in absolution, or any severe satisfaction, or necessity of change of conduct.

"I add that the new forms of devotion introduced by some monks have concurred to the same effect of diminishing the horror of sin, and to occasion neglect in the correction of character. You may wear a scapulary,* say the chaplet every day, or some other famous prayer, without forgiving your enemy, without restoring what you have stolen, without putting away your mistress."†

* Coming from *scapula*, the shoulder blade, the word denotes a part of the dress of certain religious orders in the Catholic Church, consisting of two flaps of woollen cloth, of which one covers the shoulders and the other the stomach. Great virtue is ascribed to the wearing of scapularies, as may be seen in the mere title of a book lying before me, entitled: "Modus imponendi Fidelibus sacra Quinque Scapularia indutis impartendi Absolutenem Generalem in Articulo Mortis, juxta Formulas Præscriptas: Superiorum Permissu," 1872. *The Five Sacred Scapularies, imparting to their Wearers General Absolution in the Article of Death according to the Prescribed Forms: By the permission of the Superiors.* This is the cheapest ticket to heaven that we have yet met with. Be in union with Mother Church and wear five pieces of cloth covering the top of your back and your chest, and you are sure of heaven and need not fear your last dying hour. The certainty of the transaction is guaranteed by the high officers of the Church. The ticket office of this sacerdotal speculation was open in 1872, and still remains open. The five scapularies are (1) that of the most sacred Trinity; (2) that of the blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel; (3) that of the blessed Mary, the Immaculate Virgin; (4) that of the most sacred Passion of the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, also of the most loving and compassionate heart of the blessed immaculate Virgin Mary; and (5) that of the blessed Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows. Unquestionably the pope is the first of conjurers.—*Translator.*

† Fleury, "Discours sur l'Histoire Ecclesiastique" (*Discourse on Ecclesiastical History*), viii. 14.

VII.

THE LOGIC OF CONFESSION.

CONFESSION is connected with a number of doctrines on which many persons have not sufficiently reflected, and of which it is well to consider the nature and the consequences.

The Church teaches that man, fallen through sin, has incurred God's wrath and earned the eternal punishments of hell. Incapable of redeeming himself by his own resources, since offence against an infinite Being is itself infinite, while man's merits, whatever they are, remain always finite, man cannot escape from that terrible penalty incurred by the fact of his birth and proceeding from original sin. He can be saved only by the grace of redemption. Jesus, in dying for all men, has saved all. But this grace cannot be applied to individuals apart from the sacraments. Purified by baptism from the original taint, man never fails to commit actual sins which belong to himself; he thus loses the benefit of the grace that comes from baptism, and is obliged to regain grace by the use of the sacraments. The life, then, even of the most virtuous man is found in a continual alternation of sicknesses and recoveries. His lot for eternity depends solely on the state in which he finds himself at the moment of death. Is he then in a state of grace? he enters into the kingdom of celestial beatitude. Is he at that decisive moment in a state of sin? he is hurled into the infernal flames. It is not, then, on the whole of his life that he will be judged, but solely on his condition at the time of his death. Thus, let a man have passed all his life in the practice of virtue, let him have devoted himself for the good of his country, let him have habitually observed the require-

ments of the Church—no matter, if on the day of his death he is laden with an unconfessed single sin, he will be pitilessly and irrevocably damned. Let another have committed all imaginable crimes, let him have rolled in the mire of vice, let him have committed robbery, violation, murder, if before dying he confesses and receives absolution, he goes straightway into paradise.

Hence it follows: the most excellent persons, struck with sudden death, have all possible chances of being damned, for it would be a prodigy if, since their last absolution, they have not committed some sin. And, on the contrary, the most arrant villains, condemned to death for some terrible crime, having now full leisure before being punished to make confession, and actually make it, are sure of being saved. Eternity, then, is a kind of lottery, in which the highest prizes may fall to the least deserving.

This system may, as it does, conflict with the ideas of justice which we hold from the light of our intelligence, but we are told that God's justice resembles ours in nothing.

The consequence of this doctrine is, that man ought always to hold himself in readiness to appear before God and to undergo his formidable judgment. This is what is taught by all the ascetic authors and all the preachers. The Christian, then, ought always to be on his guard. He will often examine his conscience, and ask if it is prepared for the final trial. This concern wins the day over every other; neither public business nor private can be allowed to draw off the mind from this supreme consideration. If, then, he is conscious of any guilt, forthwith he must accuse himself of it in confession. For to put off confession till to-morrow may be to lose your sole opportunity. Not a minute is to be lost. Hasten to the priest, and draw him away from his occupations, whatever they may be, that he may receive your confession, and put you into a state of grace. If you defer you may be lost. One may at any moment be smitten down, if not by disease yet by accident. Life is uncertain; death is certain, and certain are the consequences of death; therefore employ the utmost despatch. Hasten to the confessional, or, if you cannot go, send for the priest, for he only in your emergency can save your soul. Certainly, were people logical

so as to act according to their creed, the lives of priests would be anything but easy and pleasant; day and night they would be besieged by penitents; their entire existence would pass in giving admission into heaven, and, despite their great number, they would be very far from being equal to the duties of their momentous office. Why is it not so? Definitely, it is because the most fervent professors have not as much faith as they assume to have. For, if their belief was firm and vivid, they would not dare to set a step without being provided with a confessor. Happily the inconsistency is general. But one is justified in showing that the teachings of the Church, if followed out to their natural consequences, would produce the most unreasonable results. The Church rigorously requires confession only once a year; this is the minimum, in default of which excommunication is incurred. But he who believes sincerely cannot be satisfied with this use of the sacrament, which, besides being parsimonious, is full of peril. The Christian is to seek his salvation "with fear and trembling," according to the expression employed and consecrated in all the books of piety. He has always to fear lest some new sin has caused him to lose the benefit of grace. Even the moment after receiving absolution he is not always confident, for, if he has not approached the sacrament with suitable affections, the absolution is null, according to the catechism. And how is he to be sure that he had the necessary sentiments, that he omitted none of his transgressions, that he felt a real and practical sorrow? "The sacraments," says Fleury, "do not give us entire certitude of having received grace, since we have always reason to doubt if we have received them in the right state of mind."* He, then, that has confessed and received absolution may still be exposed to fearful anxieties, and in darker moments may see the gulf of hell opening before him to swallow him up. That which increases the disquietude is that the sacrament is valid only when the priest who administers it "has the intention of doing what the Church does." Such is the decision of the Canon of Trent (session vii., canon 2).† But how can you ascertain that the priest had at the time that

* "Grand Catechisme Historique," ii. 38.

† Bergier, "Dictionnaire de Theologie," under Sacrament, 6.

intention or not? Despite his saintly appearances, he may have allowed his mind to wander while pronouncing the sacramental words; he may have had no intention at all, constant practice having effaced all thought and made the man into a machine; he may even have had a contrary intention, suggested by reasons of his own. In either of these cases the absolution is of no value. It is the same with all the sacraments. He who thought himself Christian is not such, by defect of effectual baptism; he who thought himself absolved retains the burden of his sins and is in danger of everlasting torments. This thought is fearful, and fearful in proportion to one's faith. You see that the doctrine of the sacrament of penitence virtually contains terrible uncertainties. Nothing similar is found in the other Christian bodies, who teach that man shall be judged according to the general tenor of his conduct, according to the balance of the good and bad qualities of his deeds as springing from his faith; that faults are set over against, not rites or forms, but repentance and amendment; that each may find in himself and in God's Holy Spirit in Christ means for self-correction and self-advancement, without the always dubious and often doubtful and uncertain aid of a priest.

Some apologists of Catholicism have asserted that confession, far from producing the moral debility which is its inevitable consequence, is, on the contrary, an energetic stimulus to devotement and active virtues. M. Dupanloup, bishop of Orleans, in the sitting of the National Assembly of the 20th of May, 1872, complacently described the salutary influence of the sacraments on the soldiers in campaign. He cited a passage from Voltaire* concerning the nephew of the Archbishop of Cambrai, who had attended mass on the morning of the day in which he was carried off by a cannon shot. M. Dupanloup, returning to the same subject at the sitting of the 22nd of June, expressed himself thus: "The Christian nations are the first in the world. Why? Because the contempt of death, which lies at the centre of warlike valour, is a Christian virtue, at the same time that it is a military one."

These are mere sophisms, which appear in their true light

* "Siccle de Louis XIV."

on a little reflection. For a Catholic there is no evil more horrible than to die without confession, since such a death is followed by damnation. The military devotee, then, has only one thought, it is to escape such a danger. If, then, a soldier, after he has received absolution, is drawn away by the necessities of the service on a march, into an encampment, into multiplied engagements, and there ensues an interval short or long, he will, if really sincere, ask himself if there is not need to again recur to the ministry of the priest; and however little conscience reproves him, even if there is only a doubt of the need of sacerdotal succour, he is forthwith penetrated with the imperious urgency of confession, especially as he must fear that, under the circumstances in which he is placed, his moral condition is worse than he hopes. But discipline stands in his way—an inseparable obstacle. The enemy is at hand, he must be at his post, combats succeed combats. The unfortunate soldier, a truly religious man we suppose, pursued by the fear of hell, cannot find a moment for cleansing his conscience and obtaining absolution. Even when there is a brief halt the priest is not near; and if he were, would have more work than he or a hundred priests could perform. Imagine fifty thousand men going into battle, not out of barracks, but out of scenes of violence, robbery, rape, bloodshed. How many of them does not need absolution? Balls and bullets shower down, swords clash, bayonets work their way, death is imminent, and after death—what? In the absence of absolution, everlasting woe. What is to be done? The man cannot desert his post. Were only his life in danger, he might despise and sacrifice it—but his eternal salvation he is forbidden to neglect. The poor fellow thus harassed is beaten down, demoralised, nerveless; he fights, it may be, but it is the fight of routine and indifference, or the fight of despair. The latter maddens him, the former strips him of his strength. Such fighting may damage his own side more than that of his enemy. The only alternative is that the soldier overcomes the Christian, and, preventing his desertion or shirking his position, concentrates his energy on his military duty. But then the Christian does not nerve but unnerves the soldier, and the soldier is brave in spite of his religion.

Confession may make a man pusillanimous, it can never make him brave. The sight of that terrible hell relaxes every nerve and makes the heart sick and sink irrecoverably, until the ghostly doctor has supplied another stimulating dose, and that will prepare him rather for the parade than the field of battle. As to the nephew of Archbishop Fenelon, cited by Voltaire, he found himself in an exceptional position, since by a distinguished chance he had received absolution on the day of battle. He must also have been endowed with great presumption to think himself assured that by that absolution he was in a state to appear before his Judge. For, as we have seen, a Catholic has never full security in that matter. But setting this consideration aside, what would have happened had the battle been delayed a few days, and at that decisive moment, that officer had not found a confessor at his side? Then he would have passed from one extreme to another; confidence would have been changed into dejection or despair, and the fear of hell might have made that hero into a miserable poltroon.* How can a prelate seriously maintain that Christianity inspires contempt of death? It inspires, it is true, contempt of earth, disgust with life, aspiration to the celestial abode.† But a fear of God's judgment prevents the Christian from ever believing himself in a condition to endure that formidable trial, and it results that he is never properly ready to quit the world of which he is not yet weary. Contempt of death is carried to a very high degree in nations who hold beliefs very different on God's justice and on the lot which awaits men after death. It suffices to cite the Japanese, who, on a question of honour, are ready to rip themselves up; and those Indians who throw themselves under the wheels of the chariot of Juggernaut under the persuasion that thus they are immediately conveyed

* There is a radical objection to these views, arising from considering them in relation to God's providence, which, changing with man's changing condition, now subscribes to his going to hell and shortly after receives him into heaven, or the reverse. What a degrading idea of God is here presented! — *Translator*.

† True Christianity encourages no contempt of any of the divine relations, whether in life or death, in time or eternity. It tolerates contempt of only what is contemptible. To be base is to be contemptible, to lie is contemptible, but not to die in your country's cause or the cause of true religion. This is rather noble, and a sense of that nobility makes ordinary men into heroes. — *Translator*.

into the abodes of felicity. But, beyond the boundaries of Christian nations, we see a multitude of courageous men who have nobly and heroically done their duty, braving dangers, fronting certain death when the safety of their country demanded the sacrifice, and who, in their self-sacrifice, were not impelled or retarded by the scruples of bigotry. The Greeks and Romans, who did not practice confession, knew how to die courageously when they saw that such was their duty. Leonidas and his immortal companions, in forfeiting their lives at Thermopylæ, died with the consolation of having saved their country, and were not arrested by the thought that perhaps after their death some divinity, far from signifying their approval of their sublime devotion, would punish them throughout all eternity for the omission of some sacramental act. Regulus had no occasion for a confessor to go and expose himself to the most cruel tortures, to be a martyr to fidelity to an oath. Our ancestors the Gauls, who knew nothing of confession, carried courage to temerity, and risked their lives with disregard.

It is, then, ridiculous rhodomontade to pretend that Christians are in war the first people of the world. What is true is, that of all religious doctrines, Catholicism is the fittest to extinguish warlike virtues : it freezes patriotism by declaring that one's true country is in heaven, and that the believer ought to feel nothing higher than indifference for the interests of this world ; it breeds selfishness by teaching that individual salvation ought to surpass, if not eclipse, all else ; it paralyses all the generous sentiments by teaching the believer to subordinate all his acts to the performance of material practices. One may say, then, that the Catholics who show themselves brave and devoted are such, not on account of their orthodoxy, but in spite of their orthodoxy.*

* If, as in England will be the case, the issue is looked at as lying between Catholics and Protestants, it is sufficient to point to the conflict lately waged between France and Germany—the former the only Catholic country which retains any national superiority, the latter a fair representative of Protestant culture. The result is universally known, and the result is the more important as evidence in this issue, and in its general bearings, because that war, if not owing to Catholic influences, was fomented and animated by them. We believe that the result contains a prophecy to this effect, that if Ultramontanism and Jesuitism succeed in embroiling Europe in conflicts in defence of the pope, the essential superiority of Protestant civilisation will be shown and illustrated on a yet broader area, and to issues surpassingly momentous.—*Translator.*

VIII.

SATISFACTION AND INDULGENCES.

ACCORDING to the doctrine of the Church, the sinner, who has received absolution, is reconciled with God, by whom his offences are pardoned, but without exempting him from the penalties due for expiation; the sinner has still to present *satisfaction*, that is, reparation for the injury done to God by his sin. This is a debt which he must discharge either on earth or in purgatory. But this is the place for applying the maxim :

Arrangements may be made with heaven.* The Church has devised *indulgences*. By that the Church means "the remission of temporary pains due for sins which have been pardoned in the sacrament of penance." You may by reason of good works free yourself from these pains and pay the debt to God, however heavy it may be.

In the primitive Church sinners were subject to penance severe, humiliating, and protracted. Canonical rules fixed its duration according to the nature of the sins. The penitents were not allowed to enter the Church; they kept themselves at the entrance in a suppliant attitude; they implored the prayers of those who had the right of entry; they were clad in hair shirts, their heads were covered with ashes; they were required to let the hair of their head and of their beard grow, and to fast on bread and water.† But by little and little this austere regimen was relaxed; and it is well, for such severity was of a nature to keep or drive away such as found the yoke too heavy. Compensations were devised. At an early day the clergy put in circulation that the first of

* Il est avec le ciel des accommodements.

† Fleury, "Discours sur l'Hist. Eccles.," ii. 8.

good works was liberality towards the Church. Owing to the docility of its sheep, the clergy succeeded in doing a good business in the sacraments, and in making them an immense source of opulence. It came then to be an established fact that you could buy off the penalties appointed for you by donations to the churches and the monasteries. Muratori cites the charter of Count Ildebrand, by which he gave up a domain to certain monks, on condition that they took on themselves the severe penance of three years which had been imposed upon him by Bishop Aretin.*

It is specially by means of absolutions in the article of death that the regular clergy (the religious orders) got into their possession a large part of the property of Christendom. Thus it was thought you could save your own soul and that of your relatives. The priests exacted payment from the sinner in order to admit him to the sacrament of penitence; and they exempted him from fasting in consideration of a sum of money proportioned to his fortune. Crimes were taxed so that you had to pay for them according to their gravity and number. "You are not ignorant," writes Peter Damien, "that we measure the degree of the penitence in proportion to the value of the gifts." This custom of coining money by means of remission of sins is attested by the monuments of ecclesiastical history and by reiterated canons of the councils, which raise their voice against this anti-Christian simony, as well as by decrees of the popes. As an instance of the latter, take the 48th canon of the Council of Elvira:

"We have thought proper to put an end to the custom of those who present themselves for baptism—the custom of giving money in order that the priest may not appear to change the nature of what he received gratuitously."

The Council of Voison, held in 442, excommunicates those who draw offerings from the sick. This kind of simony propagated itself uninterruptedly in the following centuries, and it took place in the court of Rome more openly than in any other church. This is what was complained of toward the middle of the twelfth century by Æneas Sylvius, who afterwards became pope under the name of Pius II.

"The Court of Rome," he says, "gives nothing for nothing ;

* Muratori, "Antiq. Medii Aevi," v., anno 1154, p. 757.

it must have ready money; it sells even the imposition of the hands of the Holy Spirit; absolution of sins can be got only by money."*

Muratori speaks of an ancient penitential ritual, which proves that the custom of receiving money for freedom from canonical penance and pardon of sins was very common in the eighth century. He states that it is by this means that the secular clergy (the parish priests), as well as the monks, acquired their great possessions.

"Every one," he says, "easily sees that it was the buying off of sins (penance for sins) that produced that considerable quantity of territorial possessions and other riches accumulated by the churches, both monastic and secular." He observes that it was at the time when the monks were allowed to confess that they gradually came to have their share in this abundant harvest. † In the same ritual we find the degrees of gravity ascribed to different sins, the quantity and the duration of the penalties; at the same time you see an indication how and with what sum you may free yourselves from very severe penalties, but to which you must submit unless you profit by a means which, on one side, has the advantage of being generally easy, and, on the other, enriches the clergy, and makes them prosperous. Thus the confessor is made to say: "Every time we give advice to the penitent let us begin by imposing upon him a penance—how long and in what manner he should fast, and that, if he cannot fast, he can buy off his sins." It is added that "each penitent must observe the fast prescribed by his confessor, or, in its place, pay the compensations which consist in giving in order to buy yourself off—if you are rich, 26 pennies for a year of penance, if poor, 3 pennies suffice." ‡

"The custom of getting absolved from sin having insensibly introduced itself into the Church, the popes got almost exclusive possession of this lucrative branch of revenue. Leo X. drew up lists and categories of sins, designating the sum which was to be paid for absolution from each. You also find there permissions and dispensations which concern both

* Æneas Sylvius, Epist. 66 ad Joan Perugell; Lasteyrie, 271-273.

† Muratori, v., p. 724.

‡ Lasteyrie, p. 277.

laymen and ecclesiastics, and to obtain which sums of money must be paid. This tariff was entitled "Taxes of the Apostolic Chancellery" and "Taxes of the Holy Apostolic Penitentiary." An abuse so monstrous, and so baneful to morals as well as religion, was during ages worked on a grand scale, and procured the Court of Rome considerable revenues."* *Indulgences*, properly so called—that is, the remission of penalties incurred by sin—originated a traffic extremely advantageous to the clergy, who took for their standing place that the superabundant satisfactions made by Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints form a treasure from which they might draw at will, to be applied to believers and to supplement the insufficiency of their own satisfactions. A distinction is made between plenary indulgence and partial. The first is total remission; he who receives the benefit stands completely acquitted with God. Partial indulgence is the remission for a certain number of days or years of sojourn in purgatory; there are periods of ten days, forty days, a year, a hundred years, &c. The partial indulgence may be more than sufficient. Thus, in case of a sinner who has incurred 500 years of purgatory, if by means of indulgences gained by him or by his friends in praying for him he has obtained 600 years of remission, not only is he acquitted, but also he has a surplus of 100 years, which he may apply to persons of his choice; if he does not employ that surplus, it is added to the common treasure at the disposal of the Church. The crusades were with the popes a special occasion for granting numerous indulgences. Ordinarily they promised plenary indulgence and remission of all sins to those who enrolled themselves for those expeditions, enterprises held to be for the service of Christianity and the advantage of the Church. The popes gave the name of crusades to those wars whose object was to extirpate heresies, or to make war on princes with whom the Holy See had some quarrel. Thus, Pope Alexander VI. successfully employed this resource to support the army which he destined for the conquest of Romagna. Often the expeditions were but imaginary. Leo X. got up a pretended crusade against the Turks, and published plenary indulgences for all who contributed money to the enterprise. His real

* Lasteurie, p. 382.

object was to procure means for building the basilica of Saint Peter. His emissaries spread themselves throughout Europe, everywhere establishing shops where they set off and sold their sacred merchandise.

These shameful manœuvres called forth indignation and disgust. Then Luther raised his powerful voice against the trade in indulgences, preached generally against the abuses of the Church of Rome, and gave the signal for that great Reformation which ended by taking the half of Europe from under the domination of the popes.

This lesson has made the clergy more circumspect. No longer is there a tariff of remissions, or avowed commerce in indulgences. None the less the Church continues by confession to make use of a most productive channel of wealth. It still holds and teaches that by gifts to the clergy or the Church you may redeem yourself from the penalties incurred by sin, and that whatever you give in this world you will receive in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 29). The confessor takes great pains to explain to his penitents how they may each save his soul by liberality to the Church. The Church is always poor, hungry, suffers under this need or that, without measure or end. Now it is the holy father whose exigencies are touchingly painful, now a church wants repairing, now there is a church to build, or a convent to found or aid, now an ecclesiastical college needs a home or an increase of endowment, in order to destroy a university establishment conducted by laymen; and now again missionaries have to be sent to pagans or to Protestants. Finally (but in reality there is no end), it may be the work of the *Petits Chinois*, whose aim is to save from hogs' teeth men, women, and children, to be made into Romanists. Every day and almost every hour there presents itself some new ecclesiastical scheme for extracting from the pockets money, always money, more money. And the good people of the Church, having an eye to the uninviting flames of hell, are eager to reply to the reiterated appeals of their priests. And well they may, for what are a few pounds or a few hundreds of pounds, or even a few thousands, if you have them, in comparison with escape from purgatory, and a comfortable seat in paradise? Hence nothing is neglected to secure money for the Church;

a child's fortune is drawn on for the purpose ; or even necessities are denied in the daily affairs of the house ; the wife, without her husband's knowledge, lays aside a certain sum weekly for her confessor ; the domestic is pinching in the cookery, in order "to make a little purse for the good God." Tariffs were the infancy of the business ; confession is its full maturity—a rich and inexhaustible mine. Indulgences may be regarded in another aspect. They materialise religion and give it a character ever increasingly more pagan. The Catholic is led to make virtue consist in the mechanical observance of certain rites and to put his confidence in *fetiches*.

Indulgences have so multiplied as to occupy voluminous works for their description. What a huge and miscellaneous heap of them do you find in the "Dictionnaire des Indulgences" (2 vols. 4to), which forms part of the Migne collection of Catholic works. A devout writer, Father Bellomo, a member of the Society of Jesus, celebrates the magnanimity of Pius IX., who, "in the midst of the tribulations with which he is overwhelmed, never loses sight of the souls in purgatory, and watches with tender interest over the interests of the sufferers ; witness the copious concessions of indulgences so abundantly lavished by his paternal hand."* Thus can this liberal pope indulge his generous propensities at small cost, since he has only to sign a fresh bull or two in order to enlarge the huge catalogue of practices to the observance of which indulgences are attached.

We desire to draw attention to the "Memorial des Indulgences," by the Abbé —, recommended by the approbation of his Eminence Cardinal Dupont, Archbishop of Bourges.† The authority of a prince of the Church confers on that work a kind of canonical consecration. The spirit of the book is fully seen in the epigraph: "To become a saint it is sufficient to gain the greatest number of indulgences."‡ Thus, to deserve deification, to figure in the rank of the first class men to whom the Church renders the greatest honours, and whom she proposes for our imitation, you are

* "Le Monde," No. 17, October, 1865.

† 1 vol. 12mo. Paris, 1856.

‡ Saint Liguori,

not required to develop your faculties given you of nature to be developed, to consecrate yourself to promoting the welfare of your kind, to take your part in social progress by labouring for the good of your fellow-creatures—all that was good in the heroes who had not the light of revelation. What is demanded of the perfect Christian is to pass his existence in performing the minute ceremonies to which the Church attaches the remission of the penalties of purgatory, to be absorbed in care solely for himself, to gain a good position relative to the world to come, and, when he comes to the end of this earthly paradise, to present himself before the Great Judge with exemptions equivalent to the punishment which would have been inflicted upon him. Such is the sole object of human life. The great interests of humanity are, relatively to eternity, of no value. Manufactures? Wretched is all that! Your native land, your family, deserve surely some of your thoughts? Nonsense! The devout man, the truly religious man, despises these trifles. What with him is essential, the sole object of his concern, is to burn but a short time in the expiatory furnace, and, if possible, to keep out of such uncomfortable quarters altogether, by strictly following the narrow road indicated by the priest, so as to convert God from being your creditor into the dishonourable position of being your debtor. Accordingly, guides of the highest authority have wracked their brains to devise and set forth the means for attaining that magnificent object. The result is that you recite forms of speech which have a cabalistic value, and wear on your person objects which, though inanimate, conduce to give salvation, and accomplish your object as faithful servants. The number of these material tools which bestow the highest sanctity is incalculable, and barely will each day suffice for the execution of the entire ceremonial. Let us cast a glance on the necessary equipment. There is "The Apostolic Chaplet," blessed by the pope. This chaplet, as well as crosses, medals, and statuettes, is enriched with numerous indulgences. There is "The Ordinary Chaplet," or "The Chaplet of Saint Dominique," composed of fifteen tens of beads. You must wear it on your person, and every time you set it in action recite 150 Aves and 15 Pater Nosters. Moreover, "The

Chaplet Bridgette," that of "Our Lord," that of "The Five Wounds," that of "The Seven Grievs. Then you must not omit wearing the different scapularies. There are the brown, the red, the blue (the green is hardly yet born). Each has virtues of its own, but as you want to acquire a large gain, it is best to wear them all, and so to heap up the amounts. A few too many is no disadvantage. The brown we owe to Simon Stock, to whom the Virgin brought it from heaven, saying, "Whoever dies clad with this garment shall not suffer the eternal penalties of hell. It is a pledge of salvation, a guarantee of peace and everlasting alliance." Pope John XXII, in virtue of his infallible power, decided, by his Sabbatino Bull—1, That every brother who shall die with this scapular on shall be preserved from hell; 2, That if the brethren, dying clad in this scapular, went into purgatory, "Mary, as their tender mother, would descend the first Saturday after their death, and deliver them all." This is doubtless consolatory. You are guaranteed, thanks to this precious talisman, not to remain in purgatory more than six days. But why six? Why one? Mary might just as easily descend at the moment when the spirit was leaving the body. Yes; but this would be making salvation too easy, and would bring no revenue. We are not, however, sure that these things are not better done by pagans. There are Brahmans who assure their believers that if in dying they hold by their hand a cow's tail, they will go straight to heaven. The devout Catholic will exclaim, "Poor idolaters! they miss their way; let them substitute the scapulary for the cow's tail, and all will be well!"

ON WHAT DO THE TRANSMUNDANE DESTINIES DEPEND!!

The red scapulary has also its merit, although discovery of it is due to a nameless monk. But it grows pale before the blue, which may be called the king of scapularies. "He who wears it, every time that he says, be it a hundred times a day, even in walking, or labouring, by night or by day, six paters, aves, glorias, gains all the indulgences of the Sacred Land, the Seven Basilicas of Rome, of the Portioncula, and of St. James of

Compostella in Galitia." This results from a brief of Pope Pius IX., dated April 14th, 1856. These indulgences are prodigious. Saint Liguori, who has calculated them up, assures us that the plenary amount to 533, and that the partial are innumerable. Thus, without reckoning the latter, it suffices to say six times the *Pater, Ave,* and *Gloria* to deliver 533 souls from purgatory, comprising your own, let it be clearly understood, for wise charity begins at home. Here, then, we have the exoneration made as easy as possible, open to every faithful son or daughter of Mother Church, and purgatory put into danger of becoming a desert! But it appears there are spiritual remedies, like those specifics which heal infallibly, but which do not dispense with the use of other therapeutical means. Notwithstanding all this multitude of chaplets, medals, scapularies with which the pious are to muffle themselves, they must also wear, night and day, around their loins, the girdle of Saint Thomas d'Aquinas (of white cord, with fifteen distinct knots, the whole blessed by a Dominican, under pain of nullification). It is well to add thereto the cord of Saint Francis, renowned for its efficacy, and that of Saint Joseph, puffed off by the Marists, to the exposition of whose virtues Father Huguet has devoted a special journal; as well as the Cross of Saint Benedict, whose marvellous effects have been celebrated by Don Gueranger in a book consecrated to the purpose. Here, then, is the penitent covered from head to foot with talismans endued with supernatural energies, as in a complete suit of armour, with which he may defy the infernal potencies.

This is not all. He will consult "*Le Dictionnaire des Pelerinages*" (*Dictionary of Pilgrimages*), and will make his way into all the renowned sanctuaries, to which also are attached harvests of indulgences. In the *Memorial* he will find the forms to be recited according to the different days of the year, the hours of the day, and occasional circumstances. These prayers report the accumulated amounts which hence pass to your credit. If you are deeply penetrated by a sense of the importance of these exercises you will omit none of them, but gather together for your own use all the indulgences you can acquire. What prince so wealthy? Of course, your whole existence will be spent in

getting amulets and mumbling prayers. A scrupulous disciple of Saint Liguori, you will hold that life was given you only for obtaining indulgences. It is easy to see what the result will be : all the higher sentiments smitten with atrophy, the intelligence extinguished, the man embruted ; he neglects his social duties, is a stranger to all that goes on around him—has, indeed, only one thought, namely, how to keep out and to get out of purgatory. This degraded being, this miserable self-seeker, is the Catholic fashioned in virtue of the dogma of confession.

IX.

INFLUENCE OF CONFESSION ON
POLITICAL MATTERS.

THE Church having imposed on all its members the duty of confession, to put their conscience under the direction of a priest, finds itself in reality exercising a universal jurisdiction, which enables it to take part in all questions and to preside over all actions. It is an empire without bounds : it is the one complete theocracy ; it is God upon earth, God in the shape of a tonsured man. If all Catholics did their duty by being faithful to confession, the clergy would be absolute masters of homes, cities, nations, the world. The clergy are intimately united by the bonds of a discipline which makes them one compact whole. From the sovereign pontiff to the humblest parish priest, the impulse given from on high passes down through every step of the hierarchy : the same thought puts in movement every wheel of this cunningly devised organisation. It follows that the pope, who lately got himself decreed infallible, and who is accepted by the entire Church as the representative of God on earth, has only to utter a command for all the ecclesiastics (and laymen, I ought to add, but they are, for the most part, dull of hearing) to at once conform thereto, whatever be its nature, on which they have no right to think, much less to doubt or inquire. Then prescriptions issuing from papal lips are, by the medium of confession, conveyed into the hearts and lives of all the members of the Church down to the humblest, and in the tribunal of penitence the pope is the sovereign judge and arbiter, whose authority the penitent

must acknowledge, and to whose verdict he must submit. Were the machinery as complete as it is meant to be, confession would put into the hands of the papal divinity a power literally unparalleled.

Now the Holy See has always used its omnipotence to espouse and advance principles the most adverse to the independence of nations and the liberty of citizens. The popes have arrogated to themselves the right to dispose of empires, to depose princes disobedient to their behests, and to put into their seats men docile to the voice of the Church. This is expressly recognised by the Council of the Lateran, held in 1215:—

“That the temporal authorities, whatever functions they fulfil, be exhorted, and, if necessary, constrained by ecclesiastical censure, to publicly take an oath that they will defend the faith, an oath by which they sincerely undertake to exterminate with all their forces, in the countries subject to their authority, all that are declared heretics by the Church; and that in such a way that when any one is admitted to any temporal or spiritual power he be held bound to swear to that effect. That if any temporal lord, warned and required by the Church, refuses to purge his lands of this taint of heresy, he be excommunicated by the metropolitan and by the other bishops of the province; and if, by lack of goodwill, he lets a year pass without giving due satisfaction, he be denounced to the sovereign pontiff in order that the latter may declare his vassals set free from their fidelity, and give his country to Catholics, who, after exterminating the heretics, shall possess it uncontestedly, and keep it in the purity of the faith.”

Here we see that, according to ecclesiastical orthodoxy, the civil authority has power only at the good pleasure of the pope, by whom it may always be revoked, and that the law of the Church is the supreme law, before which all political institutions must bend the knee. In the time of the league the clergy desired a king who should be the docile instrument of the Church. They thought they had found in the Guise family the princes best disposed to serve as their instruments; they incited the populations against Henry III., whose zeal for religion was suspected—then

against Henry IV., who, in their eyes, had the unpardonable fault of being a Protestant. "Those who most effectually laboured for the revolt," says the historian De Thou, "were the confessors, who poured into the ears of their penitents all that the preachers durst not clearly set before the public, for in the pulpit they abstained from naming persons in fear of being punished. The confessors, abusing the secrecy of their ministry, spared neither the king nor his ministers, nor the persons the most attached to him; and, instead of consoling by words of piety those who applied to them, they filled their minds with false reports and tortured their consciences by embarrassing questions and a thousand scruples. By the same means they got possession of family secrets, they drew their penitents into that baneful league, and to those who would not enter it they refused absolution."* The confessors of kings have often been political persons of high importance. In directing the conscience of a king there is nothing that a priest may not compel him to do. He it is who indicates to the prince what is and what is not permitted; who encourages or condemns enterprises; who determines whether a proposed law is or is not agreeable to the instructions of the Church. This priest is in reality the master of the State.

It is thus that Fathers Letellier and La Chaize, confessors of Louis XIV., made use of their position to lead him to revoke the Edict of Nantes, and to command against the Protestants the most abominable persecutions—persecutions which brought on France incalculable losses. Those monks forgave the king his adulterous connections, provided he paid for his sins by granting to the Church the extermination of its rival Churches. To purchase absolution for the crimes of his private life he condemned a million of his subjects to oppressions, ruin, exile. Bossuet wrote his book on "Politics drawn from the Holy Scriptures" for the use of his royal pupil, the Dauphin. He there teaches that a king has a sacred and unlimited power, for the use of which he is responsible solely to God. Subjects, according to him, have on their part no right whatever; they only enjoy concessions graciously made to them by the prince, who is

* De Thou's "Histoire," lib. lxxxvi.

himself the source of right. Well may Louis XIV., encouraged by these sacred oracles, declare *I am the State*. The descendant of Louis XIV., in claiming the crown of France in virtue of his hereditary right, expressed himself in conformity with the traditions of his family when, in one of his manifestoes, he said "I AM RIGHT."

On occasion of an enormous impost, which vexed the king and toward which he manifested scruples, Father Letellier, his confessor, made the Sorbonne* declare that all the property of the king's subjects was his, so that, in taking it, he only took his own—a decision which, according to the avowal of the monarch, put him quite at his ease, and calmed all the scruples of his conscience.†

In our own days, Bouvier taught that there is nothing that a prince cannot do; that he is bound by no law, and has God only for his judge.

The encyclic of Pope Gregory XVI., dated 15th April, 1864, is an insolent defiance to civilisation. In it he condemns as errors contrary to the Christian faith propositions such as these: "The Church has not the right to employ force; has no temporal power, direct or indirect;‡ the ministers of the Church ought to be excluded from temporal functions;§ ecclesiastical immunities have their origin in civil right (30); ecclesiastical jurisdictions for trials of priests in temporal matters ought to be abolished (30, 31); governments may abrogate the privilege which exempts ecclesiastics from military service (32); the direction and supervision of public schools belong to the civil authority (45); the Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church (55); it is not necessary that the Catholic religion should be held for the sole religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship (77)." The head of the Church, then, has settled irrevocably political questions on which its members are no longer permitted to hold an opinion contrary to his decision. Consequently every confessor is bound to see that the pope's decrees are law with his peni-

* The Faculty of Theology of Paris, destroyed by the Revolution.—*Translator*.

† Aimé Martin, "Notice sur l'Abbé Fleury," at the head of his works, 1844, i. 43.

‡ See article xxiii. of "The Syllabus,"

§ Syllabus, xxvii.

tents. They cannot be friends of the liberty of the press, or the liberty of worship, or regard republicanism as the best form of government; they are bound, under pain of being cut off from the communion of the saints, to adhere in all points to the pontifical politics.

Thus, when modern societies wish to acquire a political constitution founded on liberty, when they wish to introduce democratic institutions, THEY HAVE TO STRUGGLE AGAINST ALL THE FORCES OF THE CATHOLIC PARTY, WHO WILL ARRAY AGAINST THEM THE LEGIONS THAT THEY HAVE UNDER THEIR CONTROL, AND WHO, BY MEANS OF CONFESSION, CAN EASILY ORGANISE A FORMIDABLE COALITION.

Their penitents will be directed by their confessors to withstand what they will condemn as the revolutionary movement; wives will be brought over to act on their husband's votes; there will be a league in which the enemies of progress, working quietly in the background, and employing intrigue and cunning, may quietly paralyse the efforts of the most generous citizens, and clip a nation's wings. Let a legislative assembly wish to satisfy the desires of a country, and realise reforms recommended by reason and equity, if among its members there are faithful Catholics, practising confession, they will as a duty before all ascertain whether the proposals contain anything contrary to the doctrine of the Church—anything condemned by the sovereign pontiff, who is the infallible judge of all right. If, then, the question is to separate the spiritual from the temporal power, to suppress the legal provision for the clergy, to carry into effect complete religious liberty by putting all its forms on a footing of equality before the civil law, to make all citizens liable to civil service, ecclesiastics not exempted, &c., the conscientious legislator will find himself already enchained by the pope's encyclic, and his confessor will, if it is necessary, let him know that he cannot consent to these sacrilegious innovations without incurring everlasting damnation. His adherence will not be gained by all that argument and eloquence can do. Rome has spoken, the cause is judged. If such deputies find themselves in a majority, the pope will throw his invincible pressure on the legislative power, and confine it within the limits of due obedience.

If, on the contrary, the majority of the assembly, without being disquieted about the pontifical injunctions, consult only the national welfare and the light of good sense, if the expected reform is adopted, then difficulties of another kind present themselves. The clergy will spread among the people the opinion that a civil law contrary to the divine law is *ab initio* null and void, and that good Christians should simply, but sternly, disobey it. The confessors will act on the minds of their penitents, and repeat with emphasis that we ought to obey God rather than men (Acts v. 29). Now, in their sense, God and the priest are one. Accordingly, the law will be thrown into discredit first, and then into contempt, will encounter endless obstacles and resistances; men's minds will grow bitter, and, if the irritation makes progress, there will be, as there was in the time of the League,* disturbances, insurrections, and finally civil war, fomented and preached in the name of religion.

These fears are not chimerical, for all these evils were realised in France during the first revolution; it is the clergy who, by preaching and confession, let loose on our unhappy country, the dogs of civil war; it is by driving La Vendee into fanaticism that they raised its ignorant populations against the legitimate authority of the Convention, caused that frightful conflagration which lasted more than five years, devastated provinces, and cost the lives of more than 50,000 men. We are now exposed to a recurrence of the same dire evils from the same superstitious cause. Against such calamities we have no preservation except the progress of intelligence and liberty; only by disabusing the populations of their old falsities and fears, and by neutralising the influence of the confessor, can we safeguard the national unity and maintain the concord we so much need. The anathema fulminated by the pope against the republic authorises the clergy in its obstinate resistance to the definitive establishment of that form of government. Pio Nono is the mainstay of the hopes of the Legitimist party, which never ceases to foment agitation and hostile dispositions; his ideal is the

* A confederation of the Catholic party in France, formed by Henry, Duke of Guise, at the instigation of Cardinal Lorraine, in 1576, for the purpose of defending Romanism against the heretics.—*Translator.*

return of the ancient *regime*, monarchy by right divine, even as he is religion by right divine, with a prince who should reconcile these two divine yet often conflicting rights by being a docile instrument in the hands of the Church. Here you see at once what are the religion and the politics of the confessional, and this religion and these politics will prevail wherever the confessional is set up and allowed to stand.

We subjoin a recent example of the dangers of the intrusion of the clergy into politics. In 1851 Bonaparte was preparing to make his *coup d'état*—to traitorously immolate the republic which had confided to him the highest authority, and the fidelity to which he had solemnly sworn. The clergy, after playing the comedy of blessing the “trees of liberty,” had connected themselves with the counter-revolutionary movement, and seconded the project of the head of the executive power. The Bishop of Chartres, Cläusel de Montals, published on the 20th of October, 1851, a “Letter Pastorale à les fidèles Diocésains sur l'état présent de la Société Française” (*Pastoral Letter to his faithful Diocesans on the present state of French Society*). It is, to give it its right name, a political pamphlet, in which the prelate combats the principle of the sovereignty of the people, and consequently the constitution of 1848, which recognises it for its basis. He concludes that it is necessary to have done with that constitution. “Destroy,” said he, “that obstacle of which so much noise is made, but which has no real force to call forth your zeal and enchain your helpful hands. ‘But,’ say you, ‘we have engagements: an oath binds us to the charter; how can we break and violate it?’ All Christian moralists unite to give you confidence. When we take an oath in the view of a good which has some probability, and when circumstances are so changed that there results from it so unutterable an evil that the people will be precipitated into a horrible catastrophe, that God will be outraged by the overturning of his altars and the contempt of all laws, you will fall into the most fatal error by a pharasaic and disastrous fidelity to your anterior engagements. What do I say? If the sole possibility or the probability of a terrible calamity cannot stop you, does not make you retrace your steps, posterity

will never cease to be astonished that France, that nation so intelligent and able, shall have taken a part so unreasonable and so deadly" (pp. 22, 23). Here, then, we have a bishop who, by arguments drawn from casuistry, encourages perjury, to the contempt and violation of a fundamental law; which urges men to a criminal enterprise at the risk of all the calamities which may ensue from an assault on the sovereignty of the people, against the regularly established institutions! He employed, then, his influence over the consciences of his flock to prepare them for that measure, to obtain their concurrence. Here, then, the reader sees confessors who enter into a plot, and endeavour to make their penitents understand that the existing constitution is an outrage towards God, that it is contrary to the welfare of religion, and that by overturning it they will serve the good cause.

Quite lately the clergy have organised a vast system of petitioning the National Assembly to request that France would interpose in order to restore the temporal power of the pope; ecclesiastical emissaries traverse all localities, agitate and intrigue to collect numerous signatures, make women and children sign; no good Catholic could refuse the support solicited. As soon as the cause of our Holy Father the Pope was in question, there could be no hesitation. The desire was to produce an imposing manifestation—a strong expression of public opinion—so as to draw the Assembly into a determination which, had it been adopted, would certainly have caused great disasters. Such a war, in the circumstances in which France finds itself, might have brought a terrible catastrophe, irremediable ruin. But what are the interests of one's native land to the clergy? Those of the Church supersede all others. If the ecclesiastics did not succeed, the reason is that the majority of the population is adverse to their influence—the reason is, that, even among the deputies hostile to the republic, there is a large number who stopped short in the presence of a step so extravagant and so disastrous. None the less is it true that the clergy did all in its power to call forth so fatal a resolution, and that, by confession, it had grouped around it imposing forces. Is there not reason to tremble at the thought of so baneful a power? There is nothing more important for the prosperity

of a nation than the education of its youth. The clergy have omitted no effort to get the exclusive privilege into their hands. Wherever its action extends it succeeds in supplanting lay schools to put ecclesiastical ones into their place. It thus hopes to get possession of coming generations of the young, to inculcate on them from tender infancy the clerical spirit, and to make of them devoted auxiliaries for the future. For this object confession is a marvellous instrument. When, in a family, a child has to be placed at school, the father generally decides in favour of the lyceums, lay boarding establishments; but the mother has already received from her confessor the most urgent recommendations. She prefers "the good fathers" or "the good sisters." She urges her view on her husband. Where there is need she employs prayers to bring him over to her way of thinking; if they fail, she tries cajoleries; she never gives in; she returns ceaselessly to the charge; she makes prominent considerations which apparently have nothing to do with religion. She is eloquent in praise of the discipline of the ecclesiastical establishments, the excellence of the food, the amusements, and even the cheapness. If she fails to succeed, she returns to her confessor, who supplies fresh powder and shot. She can surely shed tears, and what husband can stand out against a wife's tears? The good man at length yields, comforting himself with the thought that familiarity with the world would soon extinguish in his children the clerical fires. None the less the clergy have bagged their bird, and now they proceed to cook it after their own taste and fashion. In such a struggle the child's mind must receive injury, which will grow with its growth, owing to the broad contrast in spirit and aim of the devout mother and the intelligent father: the former reproducing the dead and dying forms of the past, the latter reflecting the vivid lights and pleasing hopes of the present and the future. All good citizens are painfully aware of the insufficiency of popular instruction in France: a considerable number of individuals can neither read nor write. This ignorance prevents them from usefully exercising their civil rights, and leaves them at the disposal of all those who have an interest in deceiving them. It is an urgent necessity that instruction should be

largely extended in all classes, especially the humbler ; that it should comprise all indispensable ideas ; that it should be gratuitous, compulsory, and laic. But the clergy jealously watch to protect and retain the prevalent ignorance, which sustains its empire over the masses ; it will have no other instruction but what is dispensed by its own hands, and which it directs according to its general plan of suppressing intelligence. It declaims against projects for the reorganisation of public instruction ; it makes the simple-minded believe that the aim is to spread atheism and immorality ; by confession it has rallied to its cause the devout populations, and has hitherto succeeded in frustrating salutary reforms on which the regeneration of the country depends.

It is not only over his penitents that the confessor sways his sceptre. By confession he succeeds in reaching even those who refuse to submit to his jurisdiction, and who have no direct relationship with him. The confessional is a means of *espionage*—a house of spies. A crowd of penitents do not confine themselves to confessing their own sins, they also confess those of others, and specially the sins of those on whom they depend. Many domestics are delighted in thus exposing the faults of their masters and mistresses. If these disclosures do not appear spontaneously, it is easy for the priest to call them forth. Thus, he can ask a servant if there are in the house any bad journals (those are called bad which are not clerical), if the heads of the family receive visitors who are “free thinkers” or heretical, if they fast on Fridays, if they have a confessor, if they go to mass, &c., &c. A penitent cannot protest against improper or insidious questions, for that would be to judge him by whom he or she is to be judged ; the only way open is to bend humbly before God’s representative and answer what he asks. In many localities there exist pious associations, having for object to gather together young women out of employment, and to place them in situations as domestics. At first sight nothing more legitimate. But these associations are directed, either openly or secretly, by ecclesiastics, whose instructions they follow. Only such are received as punctually observe the rites and practices of the Church. To each is appointed

a confessor, who, through the girls, will become familiar with all that goes on in the several families in whose service they are. Often the heads of the families suspect not the origin of the recommendations on which they engage the girls, and thus, without distrust, they receive into their privacy persons who will act systematically as ecclesiastical spies. The servants are not the only ones who combine in these dark machinations. Nearly all the penitents share in them—some consciously, others in ignorance. Delation, denunciation, or making reports, which was the soul of the Inquisition, and which is exacted in many religious societies, has always been encouraged by the clergy, who find themselves thus furnished with a secret police, whom they can turn to account at their pleasure.

We are reminded that the secrecy of confession ties the priests' tongues. Yes, but then only when those tongues need not be used. However, the secrecy is not practically more obligatory than continence. In principle the priest observes secrecy, but the interests of the Church loosen every tongue. In consequence, the clergy well know all they wish to know in every locality, and so throughout a province, a country, a continent, the world. What a power! what resources for despotism! In the whole of civilised society there is nothing like it, nothing second to it, nothing approaching it. The confessional is the clerical ear-trumpet of the world. A word spoken in it hurries hither and thither as rapidly and as widely as the confessor pleases. Let the reader reflect on the use that may be made of this universal telegraph on occasions of political crises or ecclesiastical struggles. More important still is the daily action of the confessional in all parts where it shows its apparently dumb and lifeless form, which is in reality an invisible speaking trumpet, which ever utters its reports in clerical ears, and for clerical purposes, over three-fourths of Christendom.

X.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Luther preached on behalf of reform in the Church, the populations of Europe were moved at his voice, sympathetically heard him declaim against the vices of the Catholic institutions, against the ignoble commerce of indulgences, against the monstrous abuses inherent in confession, and felt astounded that they could so long have remained bowed down under so humiliating a yoke. They acknowledged with the great reformer that the right of inquiry essentially belonged to every human being, and that no one could interpose as a medium between God and man. This was an immense renovation. The half of Europe took part therein, and one of the first acts of emancipation was the abolition of confession among all the Protestant nations. This radical measure would, of itself, have been sufficient to bring on the definitive ruin of the theocracy.

Among the Protestants there is neither a sacerdotal body separated from the nation, nor ecclesiastical celibacy, nor a body of men and women insulated by religious vows from social life; the ministers of worship enjoy no special privilege, they are fathers, they live the ordinary kind of life, they partake of public offices, they have the same interests, the same sentiments as the rest of the people; while the Catholic priest has no family, no other country than the Church, which absorbs all his affections. The religious emancipation was the signal for political emancipation. In the countries which had the happiness of being emancipated from the Roman theocracy, public liberty unfolded itself gradually, character acquired more manliness and more independence,

the spirit of research was a source of incessant progress. On the contrary, in the countries where Catholicism best preserved its empire, despotism maintained itself, the monarch and the Church combined their efforts to enslave the populations; it is specially in Catholic countries where its hideous operations were carried on by the Inquisition, which during ages employed, in order to secure the supremacy of the clergy, terror and death, and made use of means the most execrable. Yes, it is in countries the most submissive to the Church that science was kept in chains, that Galileo was compelled to retract, that the human mind was suppressed and enclosed in the narrow limits imposed upon it by orthodoxy. The Catholic clergy, with the aid of confession, holds man in a state of perpetual infancy, checks civilisation, stops all progress, all amelioration. Here is a capital vice which loudly calls for a remedy.

Finally, let men reflect on the pernicious results of this institution, by means of which the priest penetrates into a home to rule over it, to disunite it, to corrupt it; let them think of the profound immorality inherent in that empire which confession gives over their wives and their daughters, of the disgusting interrogations, of the infamous teachings of which the manuals of cases of conscience are composed; let them remember that it is by Liguori, Bouvier, and the like—indeed by all the accredited doctors of the Church—that day by day the spiritual guides of mothers, daughters, boys, yea children, are authorised to pervert and defile their penitents and to reverse the laws of the moral life.

Many men who, so far as they themselves are concerned, have by study and reflection been led to condemn confession, none the less continue to send their children to the directors of conscience. This a culpable weakness, for thus they promote the continuation of a state of things which they consider deplorable, and for the future prepare generations subject to a deadly influence; thus they retard the enfranchisement of their race. Their duty is wholly to break with a past which recalls so many odious recollections; they owe to their children the benefit of an intelligent education, it is unpardonable in them to permit the inculcation on their children of errors over which they groan in relation to themselves.

Can they allow their offspring to be inoculated with deadly poison in the vague hope of their being some day healed? Let each person bring his (or her) conduct into accord with his principles. Let him at length cease to make concessions to a system which he knows to be vicious and vitiating. Let us act according to our convictions. Let all men who are disabused in regard to the beliefs of the Church avoid paying tribute to them, and before all let them preserve from defilement the minds and hearts of the young ones over whom nature has given them control. Against no sect, no religion, no body of men, do we ask for persecutions or measures of violence; but in the name of reason, intelligence, duty, our homes and our country, we do call on all thinking and righteous men to labour against falsity, immorality, ethical crookedness, and mental blindness and oppression, and

AGAINST THE CONFSSIONAL,

the copious and perennial source of these dire foes of the human race.

