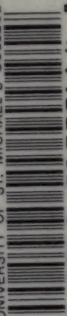
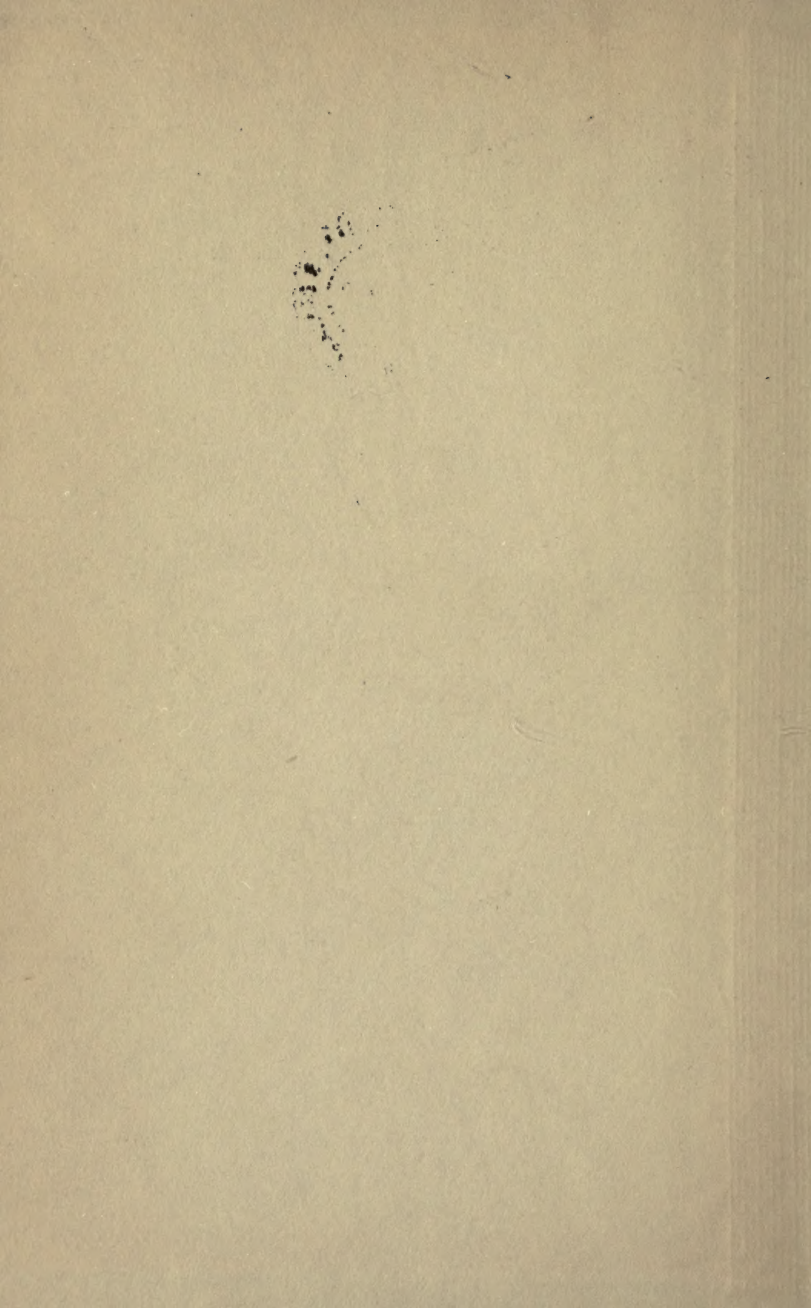


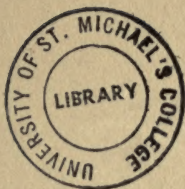
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THE HOLY COMMUNION

THE HOLY COMMUNION

ITS PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, & PRACTICE

BY JOHN BERNARD DALGAIRNS

Priest of the Oratory of St Philip Neri

EDITED BY ALLAN ROSS

Priest of the same Congregation

Διψᾷ τὸ διψᾶσθαι ὁ Θεός.

Sitit sitiri Deus.

ST GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

VOLUME II

BURNS & OATES

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1911

THE JOINT COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMISSION

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IN THE MATTER OF THE
JOINT COMMISSION

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PART III. THE PRACTICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

CHAPTER I. HISTORY OF COMMUNION

WE have now finished the theoretical part of our task, and we may proceed at once to lay down practical rules to guide us in the administration or reception of the Blessed Sacrament. There is, however, an intermediate process, which cannot fail to help us very much in this further part of our labours. Nothing can be of such assistance to us in assigning a criterion for the frequency of Holy Communion as to trace its history, and to see according to what standard the varying discipline of the Church on the subject was regulated. We know, of course, that the Church desires her children to approach frequently, even daily, to receive the Bread of Life, if they are fit for it; yet we know also that saints have at various times counselled and adopted in their own persons very different rules for the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Let us see, then, whether we can make out, from the actual practice of the faithful in different ages, any principles for our own guidance in this matter. I believe, after a careful consideration of the facts of the case, we shall come to the conclusion that in measuring the rate of frequency of communion, spiritual directors in practice have not considered exclusively the amount of sanctity in the faithful, but also the amount of the dangers and temptations in which, from the circumstances of the time, they were placed.

All history has lately become more living and familiar. Circumstances which, in ancient times, were considered beneath the dignity of history, are now continually found in the pages of the historian. No one is now satisfied with records and descriptions of battles and sieges, of treaties and partitions of territory, of the public life of kings and emperors. Now we all long to look into the living heart of the generations which are gone, to treat them as beings of flesh and blood like ourselves, and to know how they lived and how they felt and suffered. Something of the same sympathy with the past ought surely to be found in the ecclesiastical historian. We cannot help desiderating in the pages of Fleury or of Orsi some notice of the intimate life of Christians of old. Above all, I believe every one would feel a breathless interest in any revelation of the interior life of the early Christians. Who, for instance, would not wish to evoke out of his long sleep any one of the martyrs, brought from the catacombs into our churches, and to ask him to reconstruct for us the life of those who bled and died with him for the cause of CHRIST? What were their devotions? what their method of prayers? had they any method at all? did they make their meditation every morning? did they go to confession every Saturday? how far were they like, how far unlike us in their trials and temptations, in their feelings and views? I at least confess to such a curiosity, and I believe I am not alone. I have known a good old Jesuit father at Rome shed tears of joy when a rudely-painted Madonna was found in the catacombs, with her hands lifted up in the attitude of a

priest at Mass, telling a touching tale of the devotion to Mary of the saints of old. No geologist has ever gloated over the leaf of a bygone flora or the footprints of some extinct kind of bird in the old red sandstone, with half the eagerness that we gather up the least echo of a hymn sung at the lighting of lamps, in primitive times, when the Church was growing dark, or the smallest indication, in some fragment of a Father, as to how the early Christians lived their daily life.

It is not often that we can satisfy our curiosity. As the records of living things in the first period of the young earth, if there were any, are said to have been destroyed in the heat of its primeval fire, so many a document which would tell us of the life of the first Christians perished in the times of persecution. There seems to be a providential reason for this destruction of ancient records. Our LORD would seem to wish to avert the eyes of Christians from dead tradition to living authority. While enough is left to show that the early Christians were Catholics, not enough remains to base our faith solely on the history of the past. More than sufficient remains to prove the identity of the ancient and modern Church; yet the attempt to make the Church of the Fathers the only standard of Christian truth becomes simply absurd, when there are too few Fathers to enable us to construct out of them a complete account of the faith and practice of the first centuries.

One thing, however, if nothing else, is perfectly clear in the lives of the early Christians. A whole revelation of their interior is contained in the fact of their intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The

records of primitive times point to their daily Mass and Communion. Many a long year passed over before the touching description of the early Church, in the Acts of the Apostles, ceased to apply to Christians, that their chief characteristics were their perseverance in prayer and their breaking the Eucharistic bread. The one thing which can be made out with certainty from the catacombs is, that the centre and object of all devotion is the altar. For miles and miles under Rome extend the tortuous galleries, excavated with incredible labour out of the volcanic tufa, for the purpose of being able to offer up the Adorable Sacrifice. Not the costly pyramids, built by the hands of tens of thousands of captives, or the elaborately painted sepulchres of Egypt, prove more clearly that the people on the banks of the Nile had a religious reverence for the dead, than the immense catacombs, dug out under the throne of the Cæsars, by the spade of the poor worker in the sandpits, prove that the Christian's love all centres round the Adorable Sacrifice. If they could not have their daily Mass above ground, they must burrow under the earth to find it. Besides which, the daily Communion was an indispensable accompaniment to the Mass. There are documents which prove that all present at the Holy Sacrifice received the Holy Communion. A canon in the Apostolical constitutions pronounces censures against all who do not communicate at the Mass at which they assist. A council of Antioch, held under Pope Julius, enacts the same decree. And, even if it were proved that these canons only apply to the sacred ministers, still a well known passage of St Jerome points to

the relics in his time of the ancient discipline, when all the faithful present communicated at the Mass.*

But nothing shows the frequency of communion amongst the early Christians so clearly as the exceeding facility with which laymen and women were entrusted with the Blessed Sacrament. Our dear LORD puts Himself unreservedly into the hands of His faithful ones in those fearful times. Human imagination can hardly conceive a moment of greater horror than that of the breaking out of a persecution like that, for instance, under Marcus Aurelius, in which Polycarp and the martyrs of Lyons perished. Many a heart must have sunk when the edict appeared, by which Christians were not only condemned when accused, as under Trajan, but systematically sought out by the emperor's command. Neither age nor sex were safe. At any given moment, the man of senatorial rank, the venerable matron, or the girl of sixteen, might be hurried from the refinement and splendour of a Roman home before a ruthless magistrate, to be publicly stripped and scourged, tortured, and put to death. Amidst all these horrors, the one bright spot was the Blessed Sacrament. The moment that

*Chardon, "*Histoire des Sac. Eucharistie*," c. 6, p. 283: It has been argued that the decree which orders all present at the Mass to communicate applies only to the ecclesiastics. I cannot agree with this opinion. A comparison of the 8th and 9th Apostolical canons will show that the faithful were included; and if there is any ambiguity in the 9th canon, it will be removed by a comparison with the 2nd canon of the Council of Antioch. Labbe, tom. 2, p. 1,396. That canon looks as if it was meant to be an interpretation of the Apostolical canon. Besides, if at that late period such a discipline was in force, it affords an *a fortiori* argument for its existence previously.

the Church was declared to be in a state of persecution, the first act of the bishop was to distribute the Blessed Sacrament amongst the faithful, that they might take our LORD to their homes, and communicate themselves as they pleased with their own hands. Men and women thus carried home the Body of JESUS. So much was this distribution the acknowledged and official declaration that the Church was in a state of persecution, that, in after times, heretics, in order to proclaim that they were persecuted by the Catholics, were known to distribute the Blessed Sacrament, to be carried away by the members of their sect. Our LORD set no bounds to the prodigality with which He gave Himself to Christians in those awful times; and the Church knew His mind so well that the utmost latitude was then allowed, both in the celebration of Mass and the conveyance of the Holy Eucharist. Priests crowded into the dungeons, at the risk of their lives, to offer up the sacrifice for the poor sufferers in prison. St Lucian, a priest of Antioch, afterwards martyred at Nicomedia, because he had no altar, lay down in the prison, and offered Mass on his own bosom to give communion to the prisoners. The Blessed Sacrament was entrusted to anyone, in order to be conveyed to those who were unable to be present at Mass. A young acolyte, Tharcisius, was thus carrying it, when he was attacked and beaten to death by the pagans. Every one knows the instance quoted in Eusebius from St Denis of Alexandria. A poor man named Serapion, who had fallen away in a time of persecution, was on his death-bed. The priest, unable to carry the

Viaticum to him, gave it to a child, who conveyed and administered it to the dying man.

But it was not only in times of persecution that the Church was thus prodigal and communion thus frequent. After, according to the discipline of the times, the one Mass of the bishop, the deacons used to carry the Blessed Sacrament to those who could not be present at it. Often was our LORD's Body hidden under a heathen roof, with no lamp burning before it, amidst the sculptures and the images painted on the wall, and the horrors of a heathen home. We learn this from Tertullian, who urges the danger of a discovery by a pagan husband, as an argument with a Christian girl against a mixed marriage. Thus, even women communicated themselves, though they used a linen cloth, while men received Our LORD in their bare hands.

Beautiful early Church! I begin to understand the heroism of her children when I see their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The maternal tenderness and the wonderful courage of St Perpetua become intelligible when we see that the Holy Communion haunted her in her dreams under the most familiar image, together with visions of heaven. There is a touching simplicity in the early Christians which reminds one of the Indians of Paraguay, amidst the over-refinement and feeble civilization of the Roman empire. It is hopeless to efface the hierarchical element, as it is called, from the simple records of the early Church. The bishop and the Holy Eucharist are ever re-appearing. As sheep obey their shepherd, so they ever have recourse to the pastor from whom they receive the Bread of

Life. He is their universal director; he regulates their marriages;* at his Mass all communicate. Amidst their profound sorrows and bloody trials, there is a strange joy in their hearts which radiates from the Holy Communion. Amongst the scanty relics which remain of them, the chalices of glass, stamped with the effigy of the Good Shepherd, in which the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb was offered up, figure by the side of the instruments of torture, bought after the martyr's death from the executioners. The lyre of joy and the anchor of hope are engraved on their rings, and bear testimony to their interior happiness in the midst of the terrible temptations of the time of persecution. The idea of death is defaced by the hope of a joyful resurrection; and the uppermost thought in their minds is, that the Holy Communion which they have so often received is the seed of immortality, the pledge of everlasting life.

Such were the familiar relations between Our LORD in the Blessed Sacrament and the early Christians. Nor need we put aside their example, as though on account of their sanctity they could not in any sense help us in finding a rule for our own conduct. I do not for an instant deny the holiness of the primitive Christians, nor that their lives in general were such as would put us to the blush now. I only contend that their sanctity was not the only reason for their frequent communions, but that the danger to which they were exposed, living as they did, in the midst of a heathen world, had also much to do

* *Vide* Epistle of St Ignatius to Polycarp, in Cureton's "Corpus Ignatianum," pp. 9, 11.

with the generous prodigality of Our LORD. A close study of their condition till, in the beginning of the fourth century, the empire submitted to the Church, will show what I mean.

It would be a mistake to suppose that all Christians in primitive times were saints. We must remember that there were long intervals in the three first centuries, when there was no persecution.* In Proconsular Africa, for instance, it does not appear that any Christian blood had been shed before the Scillitan martyrs suffered under Septimus Severus.† When Decius ascended the throne in 249, many parts of the empire had known no persecution for thirty years. After the death of Valerian, in 259, and the promulgation of an edict of toleration by Gallienus, the Christian Church was at peace till towards the close of Diocletian's reign, in 303.‡ In the meanwhile thousands had flocked into the Church who had never calculated on the honours of martyrdom. Officers in the guards and fine ladies, eunuchs, chamberlains in the imperial palace, had been received into the Church. We may be sure that when the cathedral church of Nicomedia was broken into on the 22nd of February and the congregation, who were hearing Mass, was dispersed, when on Easter morning the emperor's edict was promulgated, there was hardly less consternation amongst the Christian flock than

* There were occasional martyrdoms even in these intervals, but no official or general persecution.

† It is now known that these martyrs suffered death on July 17, 180, in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Commodus. See "The Legends of the Saints," by H. Delehaye, S.J.—ED.

‡ Neander, tom. I, pp. 180, 194, 197, 204. Ed. Bohn.

would be the case if the police invaded one of our churches now. Even in earlier times Christians could forget the days of persecution. In the third century a long peace had enervated the minds of Christians. There could then be bishops, like Paul of Samosata, whose relations to Queen Zenobia were certainly more like those of a courtier than a martyr. Shortly before that, the Decian persecution fell like a thunderbolt on the rich Christian gentlemen and ladies of vast, luxurious Alexandria; many Christians of high rank came forward, and sacrificed at once to the heathen gods. Previously to that fearful period there was many a breathing time for the Church. There were often trembling hopes of victory for the faith, as various reports came out of the depths of the palace as to the dispositions of its imperial inmate and his court. Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, was a Christian, and had the greatest influence over him. Julia Mammæa, the mother of Alexander Severus, had a conference with Origen; the emperor himself had an image of CHRIST in his private chapel. Philip the Arab was said to be a Christian. Many a man and woman must have joined the Christian Church, as converts come to us, expecting to lead an easy life, to enjoy the sacraments, and go to heaven with tranquillity and honour.

It could not be otherwise; the net of the Church gathered together fish of every sort. From the dissolute Corinth, and the learned schools of Athens and Marseilles, they flocked into the Church. Christianity had penetrated into the waggon of the wandering Tartar and the hut of the wild Numidian. The

obstinacy of the Buddhist, the fanaticism of the Persian fire-worshipper, the superstition engrained in the hot blood of the proverbially-passionate African, and the subtlety of the Alexandrian, were all to be subdued under the yoke of CHRIST. We should expect that amongst all these many would, during a time of long peace, be exposed to fearful temptations. We must remember that they were living in the world, and that a world of heathenism. Christian and Pagan were thrown together in the utmost confusion. Christian matrons had heathen husbands; Christian maidens had pagan fathers and mothers. The same complicated questions which trouble Catholics, and especially converts now, might perplex Christians in the world then. Questions would arise respecting mixed marriages, and the ordinary intercourse of social life would be fertile in cases of conscience, when a Christian at a dinner party might be offered meats sacrificed to idols, or be present at libations to heathen gods, or be called upon to wear crowns of flowers in honour of Bacchus or Venus. They might be driven into unbelieving society, they might go to the theatres and to heathen places of amusement, of the horrors of which not the worst opera in Europe can give the slightest idea. Nay, we know they did so. What is more, we also know that some Christians who frequented the sacraments were allured into the pagan theatres. St Cyprian, or whoever is the author of the tract "De Spectaculis," mentions the fact of a Christian going straight thither from the church, bearing with him the Blessed Sacrament, which had just been distributed. He tells us also of the punishment

inflicted on a person who received the Holy Eucharist in a state of sacrilege, and of the flame of fire which issued from the vessel where it was reserved when the Christian who had brought it home treated it with disrespect.*

From all this it is evident that the frequency of communion in the early Church was not entirely because all Christians were saints. Besides this, it is important not to forget that this discipline of the Church, with respect to the Blessed Sacrament, lasted long after the times of persecution. St Basil† tells us that, in his time, the faithful in Egypt still carried the Blessed Sacrament home. Daily Communion, it is true, was more rare, but the faithful in Alexandria and Cæsarea still communicated three or four times a week. Even in an author of the seventh century, an instance occurs of the Catholic wife of a heretic husband receiving the Holy Eucharist at the hands of a neighbouring woman, who kept it in her house.‡

In the meanwhile, apart from and around those Christians who thus lived at home, following the ordinary avocations of life, there were silently springing up a class of men and women, so numerous and so peculiar that they might be called another world; I mean that multitudinous host which is known under the very vague name of the Fathers of the Desert. So utterly different were they in their habits and mode of life from Christians living in the world, that it will be necessary to treat of them apart. We shall probably be astonished to find that, as a general rule, they communicated less often than

*"De Spectaculis," 341. De Lapsis, 189.

† Ep. 289.

‡ Chardon, *ibid.*, 4.

the faithful whom we have hitherto considered. There has been much exaggeration on the subject of their communions; fortunately, however, so much is known about them, that a careful comparison of facts is all that is necessary to make the subject clear.

Christian imagination has ever been attracted towards the saints of the desert. After the time of martyrdom has ceased, the next object on which the eye loves to rest is the record of the wonderful lives of these kind, simple solitaries. It is not too much to say that the Christian spiritual life was formed by them. All its reality and dread of self-deceit, its hatred of pomposity, and its simple naturalness, even in the highest supernatural states, its good humour, and most tender charity for the faults and failings of others; in a word, all that distinguishes the monk from the fakir, comes to us from the saints of the desert. Open the pages of Rodriguez, you will find that the rules for self-examination and for wrestling with temptation, which guide us even now, come from those dear solitaries. After all our books on meditation, we might still go back with profit to the fervid ejaculations and the artless effusions of their simple hearts in the desert. Strange that it should ever have been thought that many of them seldom or never communicated. One reason, perhaps, for this mistake is the erroneous view conveyed by the word desert.

There is a strange attraction to solitude in the Christian soul. None have ever made any progress in perfection without feeling a longing to break away from men, and to be alone with God. This yearning

for solitude could not fail to show itself early in the history of the Church; and it might almost have been prophesied that it would appear first in Egypt. The Nile valley is but one narrow strip of green rescued out of the sandy desert. Close upon the beautiful cities, swarming with life, centres of commerce for the Jew, of learning for the Greek, of easy living and frantic joy for every race under the sun, lay the sands of the dead solitary wilderness. A Christian soul could not long withstand the temptation of flying away like a dove, of escaping out of this den of wickedness, into the endless expanse of silent solitude. Not even the solemn chants and the gorgeous ceremonies of the majestic church of Athanasius could lure the wanderer back. There was every requisite for a hermit life. In the two limestone ranges, on each side of the broad, resistless river, in the rocky walls of the gorges which brought the desert sands close upon the stream, were numberless caves, ready made for the solitary. Egypt was a country of ruins. The hermit could live in a tomb, sleeping with his head on a mummy for his pillow as St Macarius did once on his travels. He could find an old castle, once a Roman station, then a den of coiners, with St Paul. Or, like the monks of Metanea, he could take up his abode in many a ruined temple, undistracted by the avenues of stony-eyed sphinxes looking down upon him in his prayers, or by the long processions of bright-coloured figures of Egyptian men and women on the walls. Or, if he went further into the desert, he might find an oasis, like that of St Anthony, not far from the porphyry quarries, green with palm-trees,

and with clear murmuring water gushing from the rock. Above all, what is most to our purpose, he would, in almost all cases, be at no great distance from the many villages bordering on the Nile, or even from a town. The monks could thus combine two things apparently incompatible—the proximity of the sacraments and the solitude of the desert. Accordingly, we find numerous instances of priests coming to the monks to say Mass on Sundays, or the monks going to the village church to receive the Holy Communion. It is this which gives the peculiarly human character to the Fathers of the Egyptian deserts. We read continually of their crossing the Nile in boats to sell their baskets of palm-leaves. They let themselves out as reapers in the harvest season, like Irish labourers. They are the consolation of the poor villagers in the mud hovels on the banks of the Nile. They kneel at the same altars, partake in their sufferings, and work miracles on their sick. They are continually converting whole villages of barbarian Copts and other heathens. Above all, their kind hearts could not bear to hear of poor creatures lost in sin. They are perpetually sallying out into some great, wicked town, and rescuing some unhappy Thais or Mary, bringing them back with them into the desert, to teach them to do penance, and to love God.

These are the features which would strike every casual reader of the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, and which lessen the difficulty which the imagination raises as to the possibility of communion in their solitudes. But we must go more into detail, and travel beyond Egypt before we can

understand how, and how often, the solitaries received the Holy Eucharist.

Besides Egypt, the chief countries into which the monastic movement spread in the East were the peninsula of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. In all these countries there were great varieties in the mode of living of the solitaries.* It may be stated, however, generally, that they may be classed into cenobites and hermits, and that the former class is susceptible of many subdivisions. By cenobites I mean all those who in any sense lived together; and these may be subdivided into three varieties, the convent, the laura, and the desert. In each case it is easy to show how their communions were managed.

The conventual solitaries were really monks of the same kind as the Benedictines and Cistercians in the West. Take, for instance, the largest Egyptian order, that of St Pacomius. They had not, indeed, the same strong organization and complete system as the monks of St Benedict or St Bernard, but, like them, they lived under the same roof, ate at the same table, and received the sacraments in the same church. This was the most numerous of the Eastern orders. From its first convent, not far from the

* It seems to me that a clear distinction should be drawn between the conventual fathers and those who lived in what I have called a desert. Very probably most of the inhabitants of deserts ultimately became collected into convents. But this did not take place till after the times of which I am writing. St Jerome, for instance, found Nitria precisely in the position which I describe. See an important passage in Marin, 2, 309. His distribution is really the same as mine. His cenobites are my conventuals, his hermits are my dwellers in the desert and the laura, and his anchorites are my hermits. For most of the facts concerning the Fathers of the Desert, I am indebted to Marin's admirable "*Vies des Pères des Déserts*."

ruined Tentyris, in Tabenna, the Isle of Palms, where the angel appeared to St Pacomius as he was cutting reeds, the order spread to the Canopic mouth of the Nile, where a monastery existed, in a place once infamous as Corinth or Cyprus, and so proverbially riotous, that Seneca had said that a man who wished for peaceful solitude, would never seek Canopus. There were 1400 monks in Tabenna alone, without reckoning the nuns on the opposite bank of the Nile. The saint himself founded nine houses, and St Theodore afterwards added four of men and one of women. Here, then, we can account for a vast number of religious; we know that few of them were ordained priests, yet that they had churches of their own, to which priests were attached who said Mass, and gave communion every Saturday and Sunday to the monks, and every Sunday to the nuns.

Let us now turn to those who lived in a desert. The readers of Rosweide and Marin must have observed that the monks are classified according to different deserts which they inhabited. In this connexion a desert means a lonely spot in a wilderness where a number of solitaries lived, dotted about in separate huts, yet more or less connected together, being at a short distance from each other, and generally under the spiritual direction of one or more fathers who had obtained influence by their sanctity. Of course, the first requisite for such a desert is the possibility of living in it. It was either some wady, sheltered from the sand, or some gorge in a range of rocky hills, or some island in the Nile. Of these the principal were Nitria, Scetis, Diolcos, and

Saint Anthony's mountain, apparently in a district called Porphyritis, about eighteen miles from the Red Sea. Let us pay a visit to Nitria, the formation of which is as well known as any. About forty miles from Alexandria is a gloomy valley now called Wady Natroon, or the vale of natron. It contains eight melancholy lakes or pools, which, partially drying up in summer, leave a thick incrustation, some of salt, others of natron. This unpromising abode is said to be all that remains of a wide sea which once rolled its waters over the great desert of Sahara. The ground is so impregnated with salt, that nothing grows there but bulrushes and stunted palms, reduced to the size of bushes. There are obscure traditions of a St Fronto who lived here as early as A.D. 150, but the saint who really peopled the desert was Amon, who lived in the time of St Athanasius. Hither he came while St Anthony was still living, and disciples soon clustered around him. They had at first hard work to live. We hear of one who bored through the barren soil to find a well, and at last came upon water so thoroughly impregnated with saline particles, that you might almost as well have drunk the salt sea. Yet for thirty years he went on drinking from this unrefreshing well. At another time eighty monks set to work to dig for water; they worked for three days and found nothing. At last St Pior, this very monk who had contented himself with the brackish well, came to look at them under the hot mid-day sun, clad in his sheep-skin, and kneeling down in the deep pit, he prayed, and struck the ground with a pickaxe, and out gushed the clear sweet water. In time colonies

spread out into the desert. The sides of the ravine where Amon lived, were honeycombed with cells, and there was no more room. In this way it was that gradually the solitude was invaded, and the monks formed themselves into convents under the rule of St Macarius, like those we have described. What, however, I wish principally to point out is, that from the earliest times we find a church in the wilderness. Even when old Abbot Pior was young, he already found a church there. We are able in the neighbouring desert to assist as it were at the building of the church. St Macarius had formerly been a hermit near a village. There a wicked woman accused him of injuring her. The calumny was believed, yet Macarius pitied her. He worked night and day to support her, and said to himself: Well, Macarius, you have now got a wife and you must work for her! Afterwards his innocence was proved, and men saw from his benign kindness and humility that he was a saint. He fled far into the Libyan desert of Scete beyond Nitria, and disciples began to flock to him. They had as yet no church; so he travelled fifteen weary days and nights across the waste wilderness, and over the Nile, to find St Anthony. One thing about which he consulted him was, whether he should build a church, and we know the saint's answer, for, soon after he came, a church rose up in the desert among the scattered cells of the monks. Afterwards, as the desert grew, there were as many as four churches at Scete raising themselves conspicuously up amidst the hospital, the corn mills, and the other buildings of the place.

It is evident, then that the church in which the

holy mysteries were celebrated was considered as indispensable in what we have called the deserts as in the convents. What is more to our purpose, we are expressly told that the church at Nitria was used solely for Mass and Communion, and not for the chanting of the office. We also know that the 5000 monks of that desert assembled to receive the Holy Communion every Saturday and Sunday, and that to express their joy they then covered their usual black habit with a clean white linen garment. The same thing is incidentally told us of the monks of Scete, and that the same two days were set apart for their communions.

We can evidently have no doubt as to the practice of the monks of Egypt. We can, therefore, pass on from the desert to the inhabitants of the *laura*. Here the solitaries take another shape. Instead of being dotted all over the face of the wilderness, they dwell indeed in separate cells, but far closer together, and all surrounded by a wall. To find the *laura* we quit the banks of the Nile, and cross over to the Holy Land. We are still among the Fathers of the Desert, yet evidently the word has a very different signification than when we had the wide expanse of the great African wilderness before us. It seems that the deserts of the New Testament simply mean a lonely place, or uncultivated wild. The bare limestone hills between Jerusalem and Jericho were a desert; and the same name was applied to the wild ravine of the Kedron, where is still the convent of Mar-Saba; to the jungle in the valley of the Jordan, and the cliffs of Engaddi which hang over the Dead Sea. It was in such places that the solitaries in the Holy Land

dwelt, never at any great distance from the inhabited country. In their language a highland moor, or even Salisbury plain, would be a desert; and a solitary taking up his abode near Stonehenge, or even by the Giant's Grave on a Sussex down, might be called a Father of the Desert. There is, therefore, still less difficulty in settling the question of the communions of the inhabitants of the laura than of an Egyptian monastery. Wherever a laura is established, we find the Patriarch of Jerusalem coming to consecrate the church. Hardly has St Euthymius established himself on Mount Quarantana than he sets up an altar in his oratory. In the laura which he afterwards built in another place Mass was said every day. In that of St Gerasimus, in the valley of the Jordan, we are expressly told that the monks communicated every Saturday and Sunday. The same thing is said of St Sabas, who set apart a large cavern for the church of his monastery, and there again Mass was offered up on Saturday and Sunday.

With the monks of the laura we may now close our accounts of the cenobites of the desert; and while we have no difficulty in deciding that they did communicate, we cannot also help coming to the conclusion that in general they did not receive the Holy Communion more than once or twice a week. I know of but one exception of any note, and that is in the case of St Apollo, who lived near Hermopolis, at the foot of a mountain where the Holy Family is said to have taken up its abode for some time during its sojourn in Egypt. The spirit of the Infant JESUS seems to have passed into this beautiful, joyous

saint. Every day at three o'clock in the afternoon his monks assembled to receive Holy Communion, and then went to break their fast. With this exception I believe I am right in saying that the Fathers of the Desert communicated either only on Sunday, or on Saturday and Sunday.

Such were the monks of the ancient Church of St Athanasius and St Basil. They fled away from that old, wicked, Roman world, which was so rotten that the infusion of Christianity itself could hardly mend it; which was good for nothing but to be broken up for burning by the sword and battle-axe of Goth and Hun. But beyond these, further on in the waste howling wilderness, were men who were not content with giving up the world for CHRIST's sake. The cenobite had given up wife and children and all the ties which wind so closely around the heart of man; but there was still some pleasure in dwelling with brethren in a monastery or a laura. The convent became a second home, and there were some who wished to give up even that for CHRIST. It was no rash impulse that drove them on, or, if it was, they soon came back, scared from the real wilderness and its solemn silence, broken only by the howls of its hyenas and the sullen roar of the lions, who might pay a visit to his cave. He would soon long for his quiet bed, his old companions, and their well-known chants. But when the desire had remained long in the mind, and the abbot, perceiving that it was a real vocation to a higher state of contemplation, bade the monk God speed, then he walked forth into the terrible desert till he found some cavern or some ravine where he could build a hut. It is of these her-

mits that the question has chiefly been raised, how they managed to communicate. Did they make a sacrifice of the Blessed Sacrament as well as of all the rest? A few considerations will decide the question.

It is so incredible that a large body of holy men should have given up the Holy Communion that nothing should make us believe it, except positive proof that they did not communicate, or else of the absolute impossibility of their doing so. There are numberless proofs that their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was like that of a medieval or a modern saint. Abbot Pœmen bids his monks come to their weekly communion like thirsty harts to the water-brooks. Carelessness about communion was looked upon as a mark of tepidity in the desert, and the abstaining from it as a proof of illusion, which was punished by dreadful judgements. The doctrine of the abbots in their conferences is precisely that of modern books; and Thomas of Jesus, the Carmelite mystical writer, cites St Macarius to prove a peculiar opinion on the effect of Holy Communion.* The same kind of miracles with respect to the Blessed Sacrament occur amongst them, as we read of in the case of modern saints.† St Euthymius' face shone like St Philip's as he said Mass; St Macarius saw a light play around Abbot Mark when he communicated. St Arsenius tells a story of the infant JESUS appearing in the Host to one who thought that it was but the figure of the Body of Our LORD. Since the Fathers of the Desert had this vivid feeling about the Holy Eucharist, nothing but the

* De Orat. Div. 4, 28.

† Rosweide, 636.

impossibility of receiving it should be considered as a valid proof that they lived without it. Whenever it was possible for them to receive it, we may safely suppose that they did. Now, what was the state of the case?

First, it was very rarely that they wandered away from the convent, laura, or desert, so far as to preclude their going to the church at regular times. It did not require to go very far into the desert in order to be alone, and we find from innumerable instances, that, except in rare cases, the hermits made a point of being near enough to be within reach of the sacraments. Take, for instance, the desert of Cells, which may be considered as the hermitage of that of Nitria. It was founded by St Anthony, who led from the Nitrian valley a party of cenobites who wished to live as hermits. They walked on for twelve miles till the sun set over the wide desert. Then he planted a cross and bade them settle there. Not only could they thus occasionally have gone to Nitria, but we find that they had a church of their own to which they went to communicate every Saturday and Sunday. One of the hermits in this desert was, we are told, five miles from the church, yet he arrived regularly on the appointed days with the others. St Anthony had to walk three days and three nights into the desert to reach his mountain, yet he used to visit his monastery of Pispir at intervals of fourteen to twenty days. In almost every case where we find an instance quoted which might make us suppose that the hermit could not communicate, we find further on that he did. Abbot Mark, for instance, remained shut up thirty years in his cell without

ever leaving it. We wonder how he received the sacraments, and we find that a priest went to say Mass for him every Sunday. Abbot Moses, the negro saint and converted robber, though he lived so far in the desert that he was seven days' journey from the inhabited country, yet had a church sufficiently near him to go there every Sunday to communion. Abbot John lived for three years on a bare rock without a covering in a most lonely desert, yet a priest comes to say Mass for him every Sunday. Abbot Paphnutius was six miles from the Church at Scete, yet at the age of ninety he used to walk to communion every Saturday and Sunday. I must not, however, take all my instances from Egypt alone. Saint John Climacus does not find Mount Sinai sufficiently solitary; his new cell is five miles from Justinian's church, yet he goes there to communion every Saturday and Sunday. In the valley of the Jordan a hermit lives for fifty years alone, yet continues to communicate three times a week. St Auxentius lives in a wild mountain, near Chalcedon: his cell is in a wooden hut within a cavern. He exhorts all hermits who come to him to communicate on Sunday. He himself says Mass on Sunday, and some nuns who are under his direction come to his cavern to assist at it. St Zeno lives in a tomb in Syria, yet goes to church on Sunday to communion. So does a hermit who has taken up his abode in a cliff overhanging the gulf of Issus in Cilicia.

If there was any one phase of monastic life in which we should expect to find some uncatholic practice with respect to the Holy Communion it would be in Syria and Mesopotamia. It is remarkable

that in no other parts of the ancient world do we find any false mysticism amongst the monks. Not even the sojourn in the wild, silent desert turned the brain of the Egyptian hermits, or produced amongst them a deluded kind of prayer. There is some anthropomorphism, but not a vestige of anything approaching to quietism. All about them, all their sayings and their actions, breathe the spirit of discretion and good sense, which St Anthony taught was the first of monastic virtues. This has been probably with reason ascribed to the prominence given in their rules to manual labour. In Syria and Mesopotamia, on the contrary, the case is widely different. You there find heresies on the subject of prayer, like that of the Euchites or Messalians. You also find for the first time startling modes of life, pillar-saints and hermits burrowing in pits under ground.

With this tendency to error in the race from which he sprung, one would have expected to find marks of fanaticism about St Simeon Stylites. Yet no one has less about him of the arrogance or obstinacy of delusion. He comes down from his pillar at a word of advice from the neighbouring monks. He casts away the chain that bound him at the suggestion of a visitor. Above all, the good which he effected marks him out as an apostle. There is something wonderful in the apparition of this man, with beautiful face and bright hair, raised up on high, night and day adoring GOD. He stands in the same relation to the saints of the solitary desert, that the Dominicans do to the cloistered Benedictines or Camaldolese. Not in the desert, but

in the vicinity of vast wicked Antioch,* he stands on his pillar and he preaches. Once he grew weary of the streams of people who were continually flocking from all parts of the world, even from distant Britain, to hear him; he bade the monks shut up the enclosure round his column, because he wished to be alone with GOD. At night a troop of angels came and threatened him for quitting the post assigned to him by GOD. He began again at once his weary work. For thirty-seven years his sleepless eyes looked down with pity and compassion on the crowds who came to consult him. Cheerfully, and with temper unruffled by the burning heat, or the pitiless pelting of the mountain storms, he listened to all and consoled them. From three o'clock in the afternoon till set of sun he preached from that strange pulpit to the most motley congregation ever assembled to hear the Word of GOD. Wild Bedouin Arabs, mountaineers from the highlands of Armenia, and from the cedars of Lebanon, banditti from the Isaurian hills, blacks from Ethiopia, were mingled there with perfumed counts of the East, and prefects of Antioch with Romanized Gauls and Spaniards. The Emperor Marcian was once among his audience. Even the objects of St Chrysostom's indignant eloquence, the ladies of Antioch, who never deigned to set their embroidered slippers on the pavement of the city, quitted the bazaar and their gilded palanquins to toil up the mountains, to catch a glimpse of the saint outside the enclosure, within which no woman entered. Wicked women

* His mountain was forty-five miles from Antioch, but easily accessible.

looked from a distance on that strange figure, high in air, with hands lifted up to heaven and body bowing down with fear of GOD; and they burst into an agony of tears, and then and there renounced their sins for ever. Thousands of heathens were converted by his preaching; and an Arab chief, himself a pagan, ascribed it to him that under their tents there were Christian bishops and priests. The savage persecution of the Christians in Persia was stopped by respect for his name. Many a wrong did he redress, for tyrants trembled at his threats; many a sorrow did he soothe. A wonderful sight was that long, painful life of suffering and supernatural prayer, in the midst of that vast corrupt and effeminate East. The last hour of the old world had struck. Rome was twice sacked in his day. The old saints of the Eastern Church were passing away. St Gregory Nazianzen died the year after he was born, St Chrysostom fifteen years before he mounted his place of penance. He had seen Nestorius filling the chair of Constantinople, and though he witnessed the victories of the faith at Ephesus and Chalcedon, and assisted its triumph by his influence with successive emperors, yet the violence of the Latrocinium was a prelude of the coming time when the great patriarchal throne was soon to be stained with murder and usurpation. Heresy was eating like a canker into the noble churches of Asia, and turning the monks into what they soon became, ignorant fanatics. From the height of his column, St Simeon could see the glory fading from the degenerate East, and GOD set him up on high in that strange guise to be its last chance of repentance.

Such was St Simeon; yet we cannot help asking nervously, whether, living as he did in this strange way, he could receive the Holy Communion. If ever it was likely to be true of a saint that he had a difficulty about the reception of the Holy Eucharist, it would surely be in the case of one who lived on a column forty feet high. Yet, in the case of no monk is there clearer evidence of communion than in that of the pillar saints.* Indeed, St Ephrem's testimony is clear even in the case of the wildest hermits of Mesopotamia. There were some called shepherds who led a wandering life, never putting their head beneath a roof, and lying down to rest wherever night found them; yet we know that they went to Mass and constantly communicated. Some lived in a cell, of which they walled up the door, and which they never quitted; yet we incidentally hear of one of them that he used to receive the Holy Communion through a window. Of all the pillar saints it is recorded that they communicated. Of one, in Cilicia it appears that he had the Holy Communion with him on his column. A story is told of St Simeon the Elder in which a bishop mounts on a ladder and communicates him.† He had communicated every day before he ascended his pillar, and could not exist without the Blessed Sacrament. We know that St Theodulus communicated every Sunday. St Simeon the Younger was miraculously communicated, became a priest, and said Mass on his pillar. St Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople,

* For these various facts, *vide* Bollandists, May 28, p. 766; May 24, pp. 323, 389. Marin, Books 8, 9.

† There is some ambiguity in the word *κοινωνία* in Evagrius, lib. 1, c. 13, but the fact of Communion is clear independently of it.

whose pillar overlooked the Bosphorous, was also a priest. Thus in the most improbable cases we have record of the fact that the monks received the Holy Eucharist.

Finally, we must not forget the facility with which the Church at that time allowed the faithful to carry the Blessed Sacrament with them. There are rare instances of hermits living at great distances from the churches of the monasteries, yet almost in every case there are reasons for thinking that they were not inaccessible to the Sacraments. St Arsenius is said to have been thirteen leagues from a church, yet a few pages further on we find him in church with the other monks. An old hermit lives forty miles from the church of Scete, yet Cassian goes to see him. Another lives eighteen miles away, yet two boys are sent to him with provisions. It was rare, indeed, that they were so cut off from the other hermits, that they could not either take the Blessed Sacrament themselves from church, or receive a provision of it at the hands of others. St Basil expressly tells us, that the hermits took the Holy Eucharist with them into the desert. Even when the inhabitants of a *laura* dispersed, as they did during Lent, into the desert, they took the Blessed Sacrament with them, and communicated twice a week, as we know from the case of St Sabas. The Emperor Justinian built the fortress monastery of Sinai, because the Saracens burnt the habitations of the hermits with the Blessed Sacrament in them. I know but of one instance on record where it is said expressly that a saint did not receive the Holy Communion for a long time toge-

ther, and that is St Mary of Egypt. She communicated at the church of St John Baptist, before she crossed the Jordan and plunged into the desert, and thence only once more, when Abbot Zosimus gave her Our LORD's Body and Blood before she died. In some very rare cases we may conjecture it, as, for instance, in that of the two naked monks, found by St Macarius on an island in the midst of a marsh, and who had not seen a human being for forty years. St Chrysostom also speaks of hermits who only communicated once in the year, or even once in two years. Yet over against such instances of these, we must set that of St Onophrius, who lived far in the desert for seventy years, and who received Holy Communion every Sunday at the hands of an angel. The saint informed Paphnutius that angels also communicated other hermits. We may therefore conjecture that St Paul, and the nameless virgin who lived for seventeen years unseen by man in the desert, whither she had fled to preserve her chastity, were communicated in the same way.*

On the whole, we may conclude that no fact in history is better proved than that the Fathers of the Desert did communicate, and also that they communicated in general once, or at most twice a week, at a time when the faithful in the world received the Holy Communion three or four times a week, or even every day.

This is already a fact in the history of communion which is worth noticing. We must not put upon it more than it can bear, but this much, at least, I think we may say: In the fourth century of

* Marin, 7, c. 10.

the Church, and the beginning of the fifth, good Christians in the world who were most exposed to danger and temptation, communicated oftener than those who were more holy than they. This, however you account for it, seems to me to be made out. Now, let us examine what seems to me also true; in the time when the Church was most powerful and brilliant, communions were fewest. A consideration of the history of the Blessed Sacrament in the Middle Ages will show what I mean.

It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to say when the old discipline of the Church went out, and Christians began to communicate very seldom. Probably there was a great variety in different places. I think, however, that we may say on the whole, that good Christians still communicated once a week down to the time of Charlemagne, that is, the beginning of the ninth century. We found traces of the old familiar use of the Blessed Sacrament at the end of the sixth century, where two women communicated at home. At the same time, the fervour of Christians was evidently declining, since the Council of Agde found it necessary to decree that all should communicate three times a year. From the juxtaposition of these two facts, it would seem that, while devout Christians still received Our LORD frequently, the world, on the contrary, required compulsion to bring them to the altar. At the very end of the sixth century, we know from St Gregory the Great, that at Rome Sunday was still a day of general communion. St Augustine, probably, brought over this practice with him to

our country. Holy Communion must have been already a prominent feature in the Anglo-Saxon converts, when the pagan princes of Essex could notice and claim from St Mellitus the white bread which he used to distribute to the faithful, and drove him out in consequence of his refusal. But we find proof of it more expressly in the constitutions of St Theodore,* Archbishop of Canterbury, at the end of the seventh century, who enforces upon our ancestors the custom of the Church of Rome where the faithful, as he tells us, received Our LORD at least every Sunday, adding, at the same time, the important fact that, in the Eastern Church, all clerks and laymen did so under pain of excommunication. We may believe, then, that the old devotion to the Holy Communion still subsisted, not only in the monasteries of St Hilda and St Etheldreda, in the royal houses of Chertsey, Peterborough, and Christchurch, but even in the parish churches of old England, scattered up and down our Saxon land.† I fear much, however, that Englishmen had degenerated before the time of the venerable Bede, since he complains that, in his time, even the devout went “unhouselled” all the year except on three great festivals, though numberless boys and girls, youths and maidens,‡ of most chaste lives, and aged

* Theodore died about 690.

† English monasteries were especially fervent in the number of their Communions. St Dunstan even prescribes daily Communion. Indeed, the Benedictines everywhere, including probably the Cluniacs and Cistercians, kept up the practice of weekly Communion, at least, as late as the end of the twelfth century. Martene’s “Comm. in Reg. Ben.,” p. 455.

‡ Lingard, “Anglo-Saxon Church,” 325.

persons might have received the Body of Our LORD every Sunday, and on the feasts of the holy apostles and martyrs, as was still done at Rome.

¶ This was in the beginning of the eighth century, but other churches were more devout than ours. Down to the middle of the ninth century, we find traces of the existence of the feeling among the faithful, that those who led Christian lives should communicate every Sunday. Charlemagne, in the strongest terms, inculcates weekly communion on the members of his vast empire. We know that his injunctions were not in vain, from the fact mentioned by a contemporary writer,* that some ignorant persons thought themselves bound to communicate at every Mass that they heard, even though they were present at several in one day. Amalarius, an ecclesiastical writer under Louis the Debonnaire, strongly presses at least weekly communion on all good Christians. Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, is equally urgent for communion on all feast days. A council of Paris urges frequent communion on the Emperor Louis and his courtiers.†

Again, it is remarkable that the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, held in 836, could deplore the omission of weekly communion as a bad custom, which had recently crept in amongst the faithful. About the year 860 a more significant event occurred on the conversion of the savage Bulgarians. Wilder neophytes never entered the Church, yet Pope Nicholas earnestly exhorted them to communicate

* *Vide* "Chardon Eucharistie," c. 5.

† *Vide* "Thomassinus de Disc.," lib. 1, p. 2, 83.

daily during Lent. If such was the custom, we may safely infer that, during the rest of the year, communions could not be so very infrequent.

From all these instances important conclusions may be drawn. The venerable Bede enables us to bring down the practice of weekly communion at Rome to the beginning of the eighth century, and there is no reason to suppose that it stopped then. Furthermore, if the civil authority could, in the ninth century, venture to inculcate weekly communion on the faithful, we may be sure that the consciences of Christians would bear witness to the reasonableness of the requirement, else it would have been impolitic and absurd. I think, then, we may say that, at least up to the first half of the ninth century, Christians kept the old devotion to the Holy Communion. On the whole, then, in the days of Clovis and Clotaire, of Brunhildis and Fredegunda, of Charles Martel and Charlemagne, Franks and Germans, Saxons in England, Celtic monks in Iona,* in a word, good Christians in the world and in the cloister, in East and West, still preserved the notion that weekly communion was the normal state of Christendom.

I should feel inclined to date the commencement of the decline of frequent communion among Christians living in the world, from the middle of the ninth century. The voice of the Church was still heard inculcating it, but the general coldness of the time, caused by the disorganization of the world on the breaking up of the empire of Charlemagne,

* *Vide* Brockie, "Codex Reg," tom. I, 224.

authorizes us to consider that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was not as great as it had previously been. It is true that the monasteries everywhere kept up the tradition of communion on the Sunday; but when every coast was ravaged by pagan Normans, and no inland city on a river's bank was safe; when the Saracens had possession of the Mediterranean, and savage hordes of wild Magyars overran Northern Italy and Germany, the tremendous physical suffering inflicted on Christendom left the faithful but little time for devotion.

After that began a glorious time, the veritable Middle Ages, when for two centuries and a half the Church ruled the world. If ever there was a moment in the earth's history when the kingdom of Christ was an imperial power, it was from St Gregory VII to the beginning of the reign of Boniface VIII. If her subjects were rebellious she conquered them, for the very world was on her side. Amidst the scepticism of our times, Europe seems to look back with a melancholy regret to the glorious Ages of Faith, to its own brief period of belief. Yet, strange to say, this was the very time when communions were few and far between. The culminating point of the medieval splendour of the Church is the fourth Lateran Council. Not at Nicæa itself was there a more august representation of the Christian world. East and West were there reunited under the See of St Peter. More than four hundred bishops there swore fealty to Innocent III, while kings and emperors vied with ecclesiastics in their professions of allegiance. Yet it was precisely then, when the

world was at her feet, that the Church was compelled to enact penalties against her children who did not communicate once a year, and to limit her commands to an Easter Communion, because she durst not require more.

But this is not what is most striking in the case. In former ages the Church required three communions a year, but, in point of fact, the faithful communicated far oftener. For instance, while the Council of Agde only commanded then three communions, we know that, in the same century, a whole ship-load of sailors landed on a Sunday, because they would not miss their weekly communion.* But in the Middle Ages, even the devout communicated very seldom. It might be said that the Fathers of the Lateran Council only required an average of one communion a year, because of the rudeness and ignorance of the rough warriors with whom they had to do. With all his virtues, a crusader could hardly be said to be an interior man. They went through the world, taking and giving blows, fighting and battling all their lives long, those great, simple-hearted, grown-up children; and, like children, they were not allowed to communicate often, because they were too volatile and too ignorant to appreciate what they did. This is what might be said, and it is true, of the generality of the men of the time; but it will not account for the infrequent communions of the religious orders, and, above all, of the saints. Let us put together a few facts, to make our meaning clear.

* Bollandists, January, tom. II, p. 446.

There can be no safer way of estimating the views of medieval saints with respect to communion, than to see how often they required their religious to communicate by their rules. In all cases we shall find their ideas on the subject very different from ours. Take, for instance, the only genuine English order that ever was established, that of Sempringham instituted by St Gilbert, in the twelfth century. * According to his rule, the lay-brothers only communicated eight times a year. To counterbalance this, I know of but one instance of more frequent communion at that time. A poor English girl, an ecstasica, of the diocese of Durham, was allowed to receive Our LORD every Sunday.† There may be isolated cases of this sort, but they cannot outweigh the fact of the infrequent communion of a whole religious order. If there was one saint more than another in whose institute you would expect that love would take the place of fear, it would be that of St Francis. Yet, here you find the same infrequency. There is a letter of the saint's extant, in which he only allows one priest of his order a day in each convent to say Mass.‡ At least, you would suppose that this severity would be relaxed for the nuns of St Clair; yet, according to his rule the sisters only communicate six times a year, and go to confession

* Brockie, "Cod. Reg.," tom. II, 503.

† Bollandists, February, tom. II, 102.

‡ See his Works, p. 94. The saint, indeed, recommends frequent Communion to the faithful, but "frequent" is a relative term, and must be interpreted by the practice of his time, and his own views elsewhere expressed. Brockie, iii, 40.

twelve.* Again, the cloistered Dominicanesses are only allowed communion fifteen times a year, provided they can find confessors to hear them as often.† There are, indeed, isolated instances of rather more frequent communion, as in the case of the sisters of St Mary of Humility, who are commanded by Urban IV to communicate once a fortnight, and in Lent and Advent every Sunday;‡ but this is an exception, occurring in a small congregation, and cannot outweigh the practice of the far more numerous and important orders of St Francis and St Dominic. Another safe standard to ascertain the number of communions of the devout is the rule of the third orders. They consisted of those who, though living in the world, yet did their best to serve GOD in a perfect way. They were the very *élite* of the laity; yet the brethren and sisters of the third order of St Dominic, by their rule, only communicated four times a year. Another remarkable instance is that of St Louis. If he had lived now you may be sure he would have communicated every day. His austere life, his deep conscientiousness, the generous self-devotion with which he risked all in the crusades for the love of CHRIST; all this would surely have entitled him to receive the Blessed

* This, of course, is the minimum, and it may be that individuals communicated oftener. Yet, what should we say to such a minimum in our day? The Council of Trent orders double that number of Communions, but even that appears little to us. Brockie, "Cod. Reg.," iii, 34.

† Brockie, "Cod. Reg.," iv, 132.

‡ Garampi, "Memoire della B. Chiara de Rimini," p. 516.

Sacrament more frequently than his contemporaries. Yet, he who declared that the only measure of the love of GOD was to love without measure, was treated in such a niggardly way by his confessor that his ordinary number of communions was six times a year.* Later on in the century, St Louis of Toulouse,† when a layman, only received Our LORD on the principal festivals, and St Elizabeth of Portugal three times a year.‡ A modern devout person would not be satisfied at being put on such an allowance as that.

What can be the reason of the scanty communions of the Middle Ages? Surely Godfrey de Bouillon and the brave men who won back Jerusalem, and wept tears out of their simple hearts over the cold stone where CHRIST was laid, deserved to receive His Body oftener than a modern layman. To us it is a mystery which I am scarcely prepared to solve; yet this much we may aver certainly—if their needs had been as great as ours, the saints of those days would have urged them to more frequent communion. They had then fewer impediments on the way to heaven; even the world was less poisonous and sins less malicious. At all events, whether my theory is right or not, such is the fact. There was less danger and there were fewer sacraments. This will be made more apparent still, if it appears that simultaneously with the period when the Middle

* Bollandists, August, tom. v, p. 581. "Ut minimum" is the expression of his biographer; on which the Bollandists observe, "Id pro tempore videbatur frequenter communicare."

† Bollandists, August, tom. III, p. 809.

‡ Bollandists, July, tom. II, p. 181.

Ages give place to modern times, a more systematic struggle appears in the Church for frequent communion.

Then came two terrible centuries, most difficult to characterize, the fourteenth and the fifteenth. The world had lost in a great measure the supernatural principles of the Middle Ages, and had not attained to the Pelagian virtues of modern times. I should call them the most unprincipled centuries of the Christian era. In the fourteenth, Rome is desolate and the Popes are at Avignon, and the great schism begins. In the beginning of the fifteenth the great schism continues to afflict the Church; France is suffering horrors at the hands of the English; then comes the time of God's vengeance on England, and of the Wars of the Roses; while the last years of the century are disgraced by Cæsar Borgia. Such is the public aspect of those two hundred years; now let us try to look into the hearts of the suffering souls who were trying to serve God during this awful time. I believe that a dispassionate study of the devotional history of the time will lead us to the conclusion that the HOLY SPIRIT was ever striving to introduce the frequentation of the sacraments, while He was ever frustrated by the coldness and indifference of men. I form this opinion from the altered tone of the advice given by the saints and holy men of the time with respect to Holy Communion; and also from the increasing desire for the Blessed Sacrament in the saints, a desire often miraculously satisfied in spite of the opposition of men. No attentive reader of the records of the time

can fail to perceive that the Holy Communion occupies a place in the practical teaching of the fourteenth, which it did not in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Let us now attempt to trace the history of this struggle.

Things seem to have come to their worst in the thirteenth century. Even the Benedictines and their offshoots, who had been faithful to their old rule of communion every Sunday, now began to relax. They required a decree of the Council of Vienne to compel them to communicate once a month.* In a Cistercian monastery, we find that the novices only communicated three times a year, and it required a divine punishment to compel the abbess to allow St Lutgardis to communicate once a week.† It was far worse among those who lived in the world; if we take, for instance, medieval England, Sunday after Sunday, and even Michaelmas, and All Saints, and Christmas passed, and yet there was no communion in many a parish church; the altars were desolate till Easter-day came round. Alexander of Hales tells us that, at the beginning of the century, “on account of the wickedness of men, they are hardly able to communicate once a year, as they are bound to do.” Duns Scotus in his day bears precisely the same witness to the scantiness of communion in his time.‡ Towards the end of the century there are some faint

* Martene, *Comment. in Reg. S. Bev.*, p. 454.

† Bollandists, April, tom. II, p. 182; June, tom. III, 246.

‡ Instances of more frequent Communions in the case of saints are to be found, but they are rare. St Aleydis, a Cistercian nun, and St Christina, called the Wonderful, communicated every Sunday. *Vide* Bollandists, June, tom. III, 247; July, tom. V, 654.



symptoms of amelioration in religious houses. For instance, St Ida is allowed by the Pope to receive every day. In the writings of St Bonaventure there are traces of better things.* Our LORD Himself encourages the dear penitent, St Margaret of Cortona, to communicate every day. But there is not a shadow or sign of improvement in the world.†

Let us now turn to the fourteenth century. One of the most tempest-tossed portions of the Church of GOD in this fearful period was Germany; and one of the most alarming signs of the times was the multitude of strange and wild opinions which sprung up everywhere, but especially in the Rhineland and in Swabia. But the most startling indication of danger to the Church is a system of Pantheism breaking out amongst the very champions of orthodoxy, the great Dominican order. To extract Pantheism out of St Thomas might have seemed a hopeless task; yet there was one point where a subtle mind might wrest from their legitimate meaning the words of the angelic doctor, and contrive to merge all existence in GOD. It was just possible so to interpret St Thomas's view of the utter dependence of the creature on the Creator, and of the necessity of GOD's concurrence in all our actions, into a denial of free will, and consequently of personality. It was precisely on the doctrine of creation that Master Eckhart built up the doctrines which the Church condemned in him. They have been sometimes

* He grudgingly allows lay-brothers to communicate once a week. *De Perf. Rel.* ii, 77.

† On the Communions of the Middle Ages, see further, Appendix G.

traced to the teaching of Scot Erigena. They appear to me, however, to be the indigenous growth of the time. Their speculative basis appears to have been the least important part of them. Eckhart seems to have been urged into Pantheism by the universal cry of agony around him. "Unite yourselves to God, lose yourself in Him, merge yourselves in the great Godhead, and for that purpose remain passive; renounce you own acts, and become nothing as you really are;" such was Eckhart's answer to the cries of despair addressed to him by souls who felt the strong foundation on which they had relied trembling under them, and knew not what to do. He was no dreaming solitary or unpractical Schoolman; he threw himself like a brave man into the terrible whirlpool around him, to grasp at sinking souls and save them. He was a great preacher, a great spiritual director, as is every day being further brought to light by the discovery of documents written by him to the nuns who applied to him for advice. It is easy to see how the language of such a school of mysticism might degenerate into Pantheism, and, accordingly, Eckhart was condemned by John XXII. He instantly recanted, and in consequence of his ready submission, his influence was not much injured by his condemnation. His tone of thought is visible in the writings of Tauler and the Blessed Henry Suso, though they carefully take out the sting from his doctrines by qualifying his Pantheistic expressions.

Such was the origin of the mystical school of the fourteenth century, the only Catholic one which, at

that time, had any real influence over Germany. Now, it had one characteristic which has never been noticed, and which is fully as much marked as its language, about the absolute union of the creature with God; I mean its devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The movement might be called a crusade in favour of the revival of frequent communion. It is to be found in Eckhart as well as in Tauler, and the strong spirit which had roused all Germany becomes tender as a child when he speaks of the blessed fruits of frequent communion.* From it Tauler borrowed his devotion to the great Sacrament of the Altar, and never is he more earnest than in his exhortations to receive the Blessed Eucharist. What is still more remarkable, he entreats his hearers to communicate often, especially on account of the dangers of the times, and their own great weakness. In his sermon, for instance, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, in addressing a convent of Dominican nuns, he expresses himself not satisfied with the custom of communicating once a fortnight which prevailed then.† He urges more frequent communion, and says: "I, for my part, with my whole heart and soul entreat and desire that this most holy practice may not decrease or grow languid in this most perilous time; for men's natures are not now so strong as they were. A man

* The long Chapter XXXIX on the Holy Eucharist, in Tauler's Institutes, is really Eckhart's. It is published in the new collection of German mystics, by Pfeiffer, p. 373. *Vide* also p. 565.

† Tauler, in the same sermon, claims for the Dominican order the constant practice of frequent Communion. Certainly Communion once a fortnight would have been considered very frequent in the preceding century.

must cling to GOD with all his might, or he will fall. Time was when such struggles were not necessary; it was well once to go to communion once a fortnight. That was enough for the perfection and sanctity of that time, when men were stronger than now, and such rare communion was not so hurtful as it would be now to our most feeble nature, which is much more inclined to evil than formerly." It was not only within the cloister that he spoke thus. He implies in another place that even those who are married may communicate every day if they are fit.* Again, he expresses his willingness in a remarkable passage to give frequent communion to a repentant sinner. After declaiming against tepid communions, he goes on: "If a man wishes to be good and avoid occasions of sin, he is to be commended for communicating every week; I, for my part, if I saw a most foul sinner really penitent for his sins, and converted to GOD, I would more willingly give him communion daily for six months than to those tepid men, for I believe that, in this way, I should by degrees extinguish sin in him."†

Tauler's crusade‡ was certainly successful in introducing frequent communion into the Rhineland. At the end of the century it was taken up by a more distinguished Dominican. During the horrible days of the great schism, when the minds of good Christians were more at sea than ever they were since Christendom existed, Our LORD in His mercy raised

* Sermon. 2, on Corpus CHRISTI.

† Sermon. 1, on Corpus CHRISTI.

‡ In Sermon. 4, on Corpus CHRISTI, he says that Communion was frequent at Cologne.

up St Vincent Ferrer, one of the most wonderful of saints, to console His faithful ones. Throughout the length and breadth of Europe he went, converting sinners. But the most remarkable instance of his power was the company which he formed, and which followed him everywhere. Thousands of men and women accompanied him wherever he went, and he formed them into a vast society with peculiar rules. It was most wonderful, in the midst of that corrupt and wicked generation, to see so large a body, made up of such dangerous elements, going from one large city to another with all the order and discipline of an army. There were amongst them ~~penitents~~ who had committed the foulest sins, pirates who had scuttled ships on the high seas, robbers, assassins, and dealers in the black art, converted Turks and Jews, and abandoned women, the very scum of the great towns in Europe, all lately won by the saint from Satan to CHRIST. All nations were represented there; all ranks, from the noble to the serf. Yet, amidst the vast company, a scandal was unknown. Men wondered how the saint could rule them, but we cease to wonder when we know that it was one of St Vincent's rules that the whole company should communicate at least once a week, and at all great festivals. The saint's great instrument of conversion was the Word of God; his rule for perseverance was frequent communion.

St Vincent died, but a third Dominican took up his work. The world was a bad world when the saint died in 1419, at Vannes, but it had become far worse when Savonarola began to preach at Florence,

as the wicked century was verging to its close. The abomination of desolation was standing in holy places, but the brave friar began his crusade undauntedly. Instead of appealing to fragments from Aristotle and Seneca, backed by quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as was the wont of preachers then, he spoke of the Blessed Name of JESUS, and of His love to us in the Holy Eucharist. His success was even greater than that of Tauler at Cologne. The Blessed Sacrament was enthroned king of Florence. Every day at St. Mark's, says his biographer, was like Easter morning.* At first he durst only recommend to the multitude communion four times a year, but the plague breaks out, and the battle with spiritual powers in high places becomes more terrible, and he bids his children communicate oftener, even once a week, because "nothing will unite them to CHRIST like the Holy Communion." Happy for him if he had confined himself to preaching devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; his end would have been less tragic, and his sanctity less equivocal. His awful sorrows and the hangman's cord have probably long ago expiated his faults, and freed him from purgatory; but his chief title to our love will ever be that he passed on to St Philip the tradition of frequent communion.

But while these brave hearts were struggling for CHRIST in the great world, there arose others in the cloister who were praying and suffering for Him.

During the whole of these two terrible centuries,

* Burlamacchi, p. 77. *Regole del benvivere*, p. 216; Ed. Quetif. *Regole*, x, p. 206; Ep. xiii. p. 248.

Our LORD had expressed His desire to His spouses in the cloister that they should communicate more frequently than they were allowed by their spiritual guides. Open the Revelations of St Gertrude, who died probably in 1344,* you will find Him complaining to her expressly of those who would not allow those who were dear to Him, to receive Him as often as they would. After her came one who had more influence upon her contemporaries than any woman since the beginning of Christianity, St Catherine of Siena. No one promoted frequent communion like that great saint. Not even Tauler's fervent eloquence had the power in it which all felt when they came into the presence of that outwardly helpless girl. In spite of the opposition of prelates and priests, she carried her point. Our LORD inspired the Blessed Raymond of Capua to allow her to communicate whenever she would, and when once or twice the opposition of those around her prevented her from receiving His Blessed Body, Our LORD communicated her Himself. She had but to say, "Father, I am hungry," and Raymond at once said Mass to give her the Blessed Sacrament.

A few weeks before St Catherine's death there began one of those lives of tremendous suffering which are wont to occur above all in times of peculiar wickedness. In 1433, in an obscure town in Holland, there flew to heaven a soul pure as an angel, and refined by supernatural suffering. St Lidwina had already undergone bodily pains which

* This is the latest assignable date. The dates given vary from 1290 to 1344.

would have furnished forth a hundred martyrdoms. But, in addition to all this, she had to bear the hard-heartedness and cruelty of those whose office it should have been to console her. When she was able to go to the church, the priest would only allow her to receive her LORD twice a year, and when she was stretched upon her bed of unexampled suffering, he even then refused to bring the Blessed Sacrament, the only possible consolation in her incredible pains. After she had borne brutal and public insults, Our LORD Himself interposed, and by the miracle of a bleeding Host, compelled the parish-priest to allow her to receive Him when she chose.*

The same opposition and the same triumph were visible in the case of St Catherine of Genoa, and St Columba of Rieti. The holy firmness of St Catherine conquered all resistance from those who blamed her, while the sanctity of the Blessed Columba was insufficient to procure her the Blessed Sacrament more than once a month, and on the Feasts of our Lady,† till JESUS Himself miraculously brought a foreign bishop to advise her daily communion.

I could instance other saints and devout persons in and out of the cloister, who at this time communicated oftener than was usual, in the first half of the thirteenth century. The Blessed Emilia was encouraged by Our LORD Himself to communicate every Sunday, Thursday, and Friday.‡ The Blessed

* Bollandists, April, tom. I, 330, 335.

† Boll., September, tom. v, 162; May, tom. v, 330, 331.

‡ Boll., May, tom. VII, 562.

Clara, a Beguine of Rimini, who died in 1326, communicated every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, Charles, Duke of Brittany, who was killed in battle in 1371, did so on Sundays and all great feasts. The Blessed Collette, the Reformer of the poor Clares,* often received Our LORD every day for a year together. The Blessed Baptista Varani, a poor Clare, communicated every Sunday. And so did the Blessed Osanna, a Dominicaness: while the Blessed M. Bagnesi, of the same order, for twenty years of her life received Our LORD three, four, or even six times a week. Towards the latter end of her life, St Francesca Romana communicated once a week. The Blessed Galeotto Malatesta, who died in 1432, received ordinarily every Sunday;† and the Blessed Helen of Udine, tertiary of the order of Hermits of St Augustine, who died in 1458, communicated every day. These instances amongst others prove a great increase upon the preceding period.

Such is the history of communion during these two centuries. Our LORD was ever striving to promote among the faithful the more frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, while in the world matters were ever growing worse and worse. The struggle between the powers of light and darkness grew more fierce, and was brought to an issue in the sixteenth century. St Ignatius and his companions were nearly brought before the Inquisition

* Boll., March, tom. I, 564.

† His biography calls this very frequent Communion. For this and other instances, *vide* Garampi's "Legend of Blessed Clara of Rimini," p. 178.

for communicating once a week. One of the early Fathers of the Oratory got himself ordained priest because he could not obtain communion from the priests of the time, so strongly were men of the world set against the frequentation of the sacraments by the laity.

Who was to resuscitate these dry bones, and to infuse warmth into hearts which were arid as dust and ashes? "A dry, sharp wind wonder cold," like that which the English *ecstatica** describes as blowing over the earth, "what time Our Blessed SAVIOUR died upon the rood," seemed to have withered up the very soul of the world. All at once in the very central seat of Christendom, as was befitting, the fire of love broke out, and spread to the ends of the earth. St Ignatius began the work of restoring the general use of frequent communion among the multitude of the faithful; but the actual apostolate of Rome was confided to St Philip's hands. It was a marvellous Providence that, at the very moment when the Pelagian spirit of modern times was about to seize upon the world, the HOLY GHOST should stir up the preaching of a new crusade in favour of the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Love. No power short of that of God could have wrought the change. Things had come to such a pass that an opinion was commonly held that the Church had forbidden communion more than once a year.† Learned men‡ and doctors are cited as bitter opponents of the movements. Cacciaguerra,

* The B. Juliana of Norwich, eighth revelation.

† Cacciaguerra, "Trattato della S. Comunione," lib. 1, c. 12.

‡ Cacciaguerra, "Dedication."

a companion of St Philip in the great work, says that it was with great difficulty that souls thirsting for the Blessed Sacrament could find priests to give it to them. As late as 1580, when weekly communion was introduced into the monastery of San Cosimato at Rome, it was thought to be a miracle. An author of the time says that, when ladies went to communion, they used to begin their confession a month beforehand.* For seven years St Philip and Cacciaguerra underwent a persecution† so harassing and wearing, that the saint, in the anguish of his heart, lifting up his eyes to the crucifix as he was saying Mass, cried out, "O good JESUS! why wilt Thou not hear me? For so long a time and with such agony have I asked for patience, and Thou hast not heard me?" They were delated to prelates and cardinals, and threatened with the Inquisition. Meanwhile in the little church of San Girolamo della Carità a blessed work went on which was destined to change the face of Christendom. A spectacle was seen there, which had not been witnessed for many a century. "There," says an eye-witness, "many persons used to communicate, some every Sunday, others three or four times a week, others even every day, so that each morning looked like Easter-day." "There every Sunday," shortly after the beginning of the movement, "at least three hundred persons used to approach the altar, and on week days at

* Garampi, 510, 516.

† From 1552 to 1559; it appears that the persecutions mentioned in Bacci, lib. i, 16, were in consequence of St Philip's movement in favour of frequent Communion. Compare Marangoni's "Life of Cacciaguerra," c. 19.

least seventy, a thing which in those times was very wonderful, and did not come to pass without great tribulation for the servant of GOD and his companions." We may estimate by this sentence how great was the need and small were the beginnings of that revolution which first spread through Rome, and then was felt to the end of the Catholic Church. We feel it to this day. Those seventy communicants were the nucleus of millions of communions. What St Catherine of Siena spent her life in preaching, what Tauler, St Vincent Ferrer, and Savonarola fought for, St. Philip brought to pass. To counter-balance the fearful dangers which encompass us since the Reformation, the HOLY SPIRIT inspired the saint to inaugurate a movement in favour of frequent communion, which from that day to this has never ceased.

And now, after this long review of the history of communion in the Church, what are the conclusions to which we may fairly come? I think we may be said to have arrived at three.

First, of the eighteen centuries of the existence of the Church, there were only four, the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, during which infrequent communion reigned, without a visible movement against it among persons living in the world. I conclude from this that frequent communion is the normal state of the Church.

Secondly, this conclusion is still further strengthened, when we remember that, up to the end of the twelfth century, in all monasteries under the Benedictine rule, the inmates communicated every

Sunday. To appreciate the full force of this fact let us recollect the enormous number of Benedictine, Cluniac, and Cistercian monasteries scattered all over Christendom. We must also reflect that devotion, at that time, was nearly coincident with the cloister. It will, therefore, reduce the time of unresisted infrequent communion in the case of the devout to the thirteenth century, with the additional drawback of symptoms of an increase in communion towards the latter end of it.

Thirdly, I think it has been proved that the frequency of communion is regulated, partly at least, by the class of dangers to which the faithful are exposed. If this is the case, then, let us avoid, in this matter at least, imitating the Middle Ages. I say nothing about medieval art, which I entirely put out of the question, for I am not writing a treatise on æsthetics. But if there be one age of the Church more than another, the virtues and the vices, the wants and dangers of which are utterly unlike our own, it is the medieval time. For some time past a notion has got abroad that the Middle Ages are the model period of the Church of CHRIST. I do not think this true, and if untrue, it is mischievous and unreal. The times in which we live are so utterly unlike the age of St Bernard and St Thomas that we can only imitate its externals; and the result can only be a sham. Our work is to deal with children of the nineteenth century; they are flocking into the Church every day, and we have got to make good Catholics of them, to mould good children of the Church out of the cool, contemptuous Englishman, with habits of

rampant independent judgement and universal criticism. It is in vain to educate them, unless you make them devout. The problem is, how to make them good, humble Christians. Our restless intellects, however, and habits of subtle introspection, our turbid, agitated hearts and undisciplined feelings, can only be quieted by stronger spells than were sufficient for our ancestors. A revival is now taking place, full of consolation, yet full of anxiety. To guide it, I believe the method of the primitive Church more effectual than that of the Middle Ages. It may seem a paradox to say so, but the age in which we live is far more like the first ages of Christianity than like the Church of St Gregory VII. Surely the tone of society in which we are resembles that of the Romans of the time of Commodus rather than that of the Crusaders. True, there is no persecution. I am far from forgetting that; but for that very reason the world is a hundredfold more dangerous. What will save us from it? Nothing but love, and where shall we find love except in frequent communion?

Surely, however, you will say, danger is not the only condition for often receiving the Blessed Sacrament. Reader, I did not say that it was. There must be a limit, and we shall by and by attempt to ascertain it.

CHAPTER II. SEVERITY AND RIGORISM

WHY did JESUS come down from heaven and become man? For us men and for our salvation. If man had never fallen, He would have descended in another guise, and for another purpose. But we have not at this moment anything to do with the splendours of a possible Incarnation, or the order of the Divine decrees. We have not even to consider the many other ends which are actually fulfilled by Our LORD's assumption of our nature, such as the glory of His Heavenly FATHER. The sacraments are the great instruments by which our actual salvation, as individuals, is effected, the channels of the precious Blood to each one of us. In treating, therefore, of any of them, not as it is in itself, but as it is received by us, we necessarily come across sin and sinners. Even the most glorious Sacrament of the Altar has to do with the destruction of sin, and in writing on the Holy Communion we must consider its relations to sinners. The most delicate and difficult part of its administration has to do with its application as a remedy for the many disorders of our fallen nature. Here a priest has all sorts of dangers to avoid; he may be rigorous or he may be lax; and the difficulty principally lies in the fact, that the right conduct is not an accurate mean between two extremes. The same priest has at times to be as severe as a judge, at other times to be tender as a mother. The measure of the distribution of the Body and Blood of JESUS is neither a rule of wood, nor, like Aristotle's Lesbian, one of lead; rather it is no rule at all, but a living spirit.

It can hardly be defined; it can only be described. Happily for us, we have the Church to guide us. In the last chapter we saw what had been the practice of saints and holy men with respect to the communion of the devout; we must now consider the discipline of the Church in the distribution of the Bread of Life to sinners.

There is an expression in frequent use among theologians which may be set side by side with the words of the creed which we have just quoted. Who can hear without a thrill of joy the glorious song, "*Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem?*" There are other words very like them which ought to be written over every confessional in Christendom, or, at least in the heart of every priest—" *Sacramenta propter homines.*" Nor is the juxtaposition of the two sentences at all arbitrary; there is a living connexion between them; the one flows out of the other. Proclaim it aloud; go ye unto all nations. GOD has come down to earth and has become man, for us men, and for our salvation. He is JESUS, the Saviour. Has He then abrogated His old laws, and dashed to earth, like His servant of old, the tables of the decalogue? No; He came not to destroy but to fulfil the law. The eternal laws of GOD cannot lose their force; GOD Himself cannot abrogate them, because He cannot cease to be Himself. To give licence to sin would not be the way to save mankind. JESUS Himself, therefore, is at times severe. Has not the same voice that absolved the Magdalene said also, Woe unto you, ye hypocrites? Yet at the same time, how marvellous-

ly flexible is His conduct? See how like a serpent is the gentle Dove in His conversation with the woman of Samaria? He winds Himself into the inmost recesses of that dark heart, by adapting Himself to every turning of its labyrinths; He glides round her prejudices, instead of breaking through them, till at last He holds that wild, capricious soul in the folds of His all-embracing love. Just so flexible, and yet so severe are the sacraments. Never rigid, even in their severity, as though they were living things, they never forget that they have to do with men. Now, the very characteristic of our strange double nature is its changeableness. It is unlike the angels, both in good and evil. It has neither their fixedness in virtue nor their horrible tenacity in sin; and the sacraments, which are meant for our healing, adapt themselves in all instances to our mercurial being. Whenever their laws are stern, it is because of some reason founded in our weakness, while their general flexibility is owing to their being made for men, according to the axiom which we have quoted.

Let us take, for instance, the Sacrament of Penance. Absolution is inexorably refused in all cases of voluntary approximate occasions of sin. In other words, no man is judged worthy of pardon who wilfully remains in a position where he is in peril of committing sin, when he might avoid the danger by breaking off the occasion. The Church knows human nature too well to allow the feeble child of Adam to trust himself within reach of the tempter's net. He may protest that he will not sin,

but he is not made of adamant, and his will, in all probability, will change in the presence of temptation. At all events, in such a frail creature as he, the very wish to place himself in peril is a proof that he does not appreciate the horror of the sin; and, notwithstanding all his protestations, he must break off the occasion, or go away unabsolved. How different is the administration of the sacrament with respect to the *recidive* ! How flexible are the sternest laws; how varied the application of the wildest principles ! Never must absolution be given unless the confessor has a moral certainty of the firm resolve of the penitent never to sin again. Such is the principle; yet, let but a relapsed sinner present himself, who is in danger of despair if he goes away unabsolved, and the sternest theology at once unbends; the confessor must conditionally absolve him, however doubtful he may be of the dispositions of the penitent.* Again, theologians say that no man is worthy of absolution who would not rather die there and then than commit the sin again; yet the confessor is especially warned never to present such an alternative before the sinner; in other words, the rule, though speculatively true, is not applicable in practice, since it has reference to a nature so timid and frightened at virtue as that of man. The confessor takes refuge in the very changeableness of the frail creature before him, to persuade himself that there is now, at least, in the penitent's heart, a sovereign act of detestation of

* *Vide* Cardinal Gousset, "Théologie Morale, Traité de la Pénitence," c. v, No. 473, also principes laid down, c. x, No. 555.

sin, though he knows full well, by a sad experience, that not improbably this transient act will, before a week is out, have yielded before the demon power of habit. He contents himself with such proofs of the efficacious resolve of the sinner as the mere fact of his continuing to come to confession when there is no external call,* or a longer resistance before falling, all which would be absurdly inadequate to the speculative principles laid down, if he did not remember that he was dealing with a nature changeable as the wind and unstable as water. Any theology which forgot this, however logically true, would be practically false, and any confessor who acted upon it, would be at once a rigorist.

Rigorism, then, may be described to be the forgetfulness of the axiom, "*sacramenta propter homines.*" It is not severity but inflexibility; it is the wooden application of rules without remembering how far they are to bend before varieties of time, place, and persons. Bearing these principles in mind, let us look for examples severally of severity and rigorism with respect to Holy Communion, in different periods of the Church's history.

Never had the Church of God, in her wrestling with the world, a harder task to play than in the early ages of her existence. We know how prodigal she was of the Blessed Sacrament to her devout children, but what was she to do with the sinful, of whom there were not a few? It is a wonderful sight to see the Church struggling with the old

* Such is the opinion of Segneri and other theologians. St Alphonso agrees, adding "*præcise—si pœnitens ut accederet ad sacramentum notabilem conatum adhibuit,*" lib. vi, 460.

heathen world. Christians are bad enough, but eighteen hundred years of Christianity have at least fixed firmly in the public conscience certain principles which not even sin can wash out. There is one God; there are eternal principles of right and wrong; every man has a soul to be saved or lost. You know how to deal with men who have a conscience. But when that very conscience has got to be resuscitated, is it not like creating a soul under the ribs of death? It is a spectacle worth seeing, the sacraments at work upon such materials as that, the crucifix making its way into that great heathen Rome, where Nero was emperor, with Poppœa by his side. Humanly speaking, it was not easy to make nominal Christians of them, but it was hard, indeed, really to Christianize the lazy loungers who daily occupied the marble seats in the baths of Diocletian or Caracalla, who frequented the theatres, where obscenity had ceased to be infamous, and haunted the Suburra, or revelled in the blood of the dying gladiator. While the little flock met in the hired house of St Paul, there was little need of casuistry, but when, long afterwards, the majority of the twelve hundred thousand souls* crowded into the twelve miles of wall which surrounded Rome had become Christians, then, indeed, the Church had need of all her wisdom in the administration of the sacraments. Was she to be as prodigal of the Holy Communion to the relapsed sinner as to him who had kept his baptismal robe?

* This is Gibbon's calculation. A later authority makes it two millions, *vide* Conybeare and Howson, vol. II, 377.

Everything proves to us that tares soon began to grow among the wheat. The presence of heresy is a clear proof of this; if no miraculous interposition of Providence preserved the Church from the presence of heresy, if the rampant intellect of man was allowed to exercise itself on the dogmas of Christianity, it is not likely that Christianity should have vanquished without a struggle the moral part of man. Besides, of the heresies which, by the time of St Irenæus and of Hippolytus, had sprung up in the Church, many were accompanied by foul and dreadful sins. The wild Cainites who worshipped the principle of evil, were baptized Christians; among the fifty sects of Gnostics, many disgraced the Christian name by their vices; and while on the distant shores of the Black Sea, Marcion was infamous at once by his dissoluteness and his error, the civilization of France did not preserve the Gallic Church from such dealers in the black art as the licentious Mark, at once a wizard and a heretic. With all this wickedness around her, it is not wonderful that the Church was severe. All that I maintain is, that even when most severe, she was never rigid.

First, at no period of her existence did the Church change her discipline with respect to sinners so completely as in the first five centuries; never did she adapt herself more marvellously to the times. There is a strange superstition, for I can call it nothing else, in the minds of men about that early Church. It seems to be a great unknown void, in which the imagination of man may exercise itself

at will. No man approaches it without some preconceived theory, according to which he interprets the vague forms which he sees, or dreams he sees, moving about in the dim morning light. One of the strangest instances of the intrusion of prejudice into history is the mode in which writers have treated questions which concern the discipline of the early Church. The purer the Church, it is argued, the more severe it must be in punishing sin; now, the Church was purest at its source, therefore it was most severe. There are few of us who, some time in our lives, have not been the victims of such reasoning as this. Then, to help our imagination, comes some canon of Saint Basil, condemning a sinner to a penance of thirty years; and from the inveterate habit which we have of flinging confusedly together all that comes out of the Fathers into that one great vague category, called the early Church, we straightway assume that, in the first century, sinners were treated as they were in the fourth. The facts of the case, however, are precisely the contrary. The Church began with lenity. More than two centuries elapsed before she tried the experiment of severity.* A better type of the method of the early Church cannot be found than that which is furnished by the case of the incestuous Corinthian. How fiery is the indignation of the great apostle! how terribly solemn his denunciation! Listen to his sentence: "In the name of Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, you being gathered to-

* *Vide* Orsi. De Cap. Crim. abs., sec. 1, cap. 7, 2; sec. 4; Dig. 5. *Ibid.*, cap. 2, 4.

gether, and my spirit with the power of Our LORD JESUS, to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, . . . With such an one not so much as to eat." Yet, even at the moment that he was writing this, all the mother in the apostle was aroused, and he was yearning for his child. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears." In the course of a very few months the excommunicated man is absolved. "You should rather pardon and comfort, lest, perhaps, such an one should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow." In the spring of A.D. 57 the excommunication was pronounced; before the autumn leaves had fallen at Corinth, the sinner was absolved. Who does not remember the beautiful story of St John, the Apostle of Love, and the young captain of banditti? His penance, robber, and murderer as he was, could not have lasted more than a few weeks, since, by the time that the apostle's visitation was over, before he had left the place, the penitent, as we are told, "was restored to the Church."* And this lenity lasted long after apostolic times. In the canons called apostolical we meet with none of the terrible canons and the astounding penances which startle us in later collections. Seldom is any fixed time assigned for penance; once mention is made of a fast of a few weeks. As soon as the bishop saw that the sinner was contrite, he was absolved.† It was

* Francolinus, Vet. Eccl. sev. vindicata, lib. 1, disp. 9; Apostolical Constitutions, lib. 2, cap. 19.

† Orsi even argues, from St Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, that *mœchi* were not put to public penance in apostolic times at

not till the middle of the third century that any direct penitential canons were passed. Before the time of St Gregory Thaumaturgus there were no accurate divisions of public penitents. Previous to that time the very longest penance on record lasted hardly three years. It was not till the long peace between the persecutions of Severus and Decius had brought vast multitudes into her pale, that the Church, as though astonished at the growing corruption, roused herself to try to strangle sin by severity.* The taunts of Novatian heretics certainly helped to sting some particular churches into greater rigour, just as Jansenism imparted a certain stately Puritanism even to the orthodox Gallican Church. It was after that time that the Holy Communion began to be deferred till long after absolution, while in earlier times the absolved penitent went straight to the altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament.† By St Basil's times the Church attained the maximum of severity, since in the canons which go by his name, we find express mention of many sins for which no provision had been made in the ancient penitential laws of earlier times. In one place we are expressly told that he lays a penance of fifteen years upon a sin punished formerly

all until they had demonstrated their impenitence by perseverance in sin. De Cap. Crim. abs., sec. i, cap. 1, 5. For the date of the Epistles, *vide* Conybeare and Howson, vol. II, 560.

* Even Morinus, whose tendencies are rigorist, has (lib. iv, 21, 7) the following remarkable words: Referring to several places in his book, he says: "Probatur pœnas criminibus impositas ante Novatum breves admodum fuisse, et nonnunquam sceleratissimis hominibus pacem et communionem certis de causis nulla imposita exteriore pœnitentia statim esse redditam."

† Morinus, *ibid.*

by a penance of one. This severity was a forlorn and desperate experiment, which did not last long. Sin only increased under the pressure of the canons. The overwhelming tide of wickedness still rolled on, and rose higher and higher till it became a very deluge. By the time that half of the two hundred thousand inhabitants of Antioch* were Christians the public penances were few and far between. The tone of St Chrysostom's homilies is utterly inconsistent with the view which imagination has conjured up of the multitude of penitents beating their breasts at the door of the church. There is little said of public penance to those numerous Christians whom his indignant eloquence pictures as feasting their prurient curiosity on the foul spectacles of the theatre. They are even exhorted to receive the Holy Communion in sermons which might be preached in a Lent retreat at Notre Dame or St Roch to the fine ladies of modern Paris.† By the time that he arrived at his patriarchal throne the ancient discipline had disappeared. It could only have been enforced on a willing people, and the lords of the Hippodrome at Constantinople, or the maids of honour of Eudoxia, could not with any probability of success have been exhorted to public penance. The saint's own character was utterly averse to rigour. He was firm as a rock against an impious court, but his kind heart could not stand a sinner's tears. It is curious to find an accusation of laxity amongst the charges preferred against him.

* Milman's note to Gibbon, c. 15.

† In Matt. Hom. 7.

A sudden zeal for ecclesiastical rigour seized upon the imperial court, and the patriarch is accused of receiving sinners and absolving them as often as they chose to come to him.* The very office of public penitentiary had been abolished, as we know, under Nectarius, St Chrysostom's predecessor. From that time the discipline of the Greek Church had completely changed. Public penance for secret sins no longer existed.† Absolution was pronounced at the very beginning of public penance, and Holy Communion deferred to the end. As for the African Church, which, with the Greek, were the two rigid churches of antiquity, it perished with St Augustine. The barbarian trumpets were sounding around the walls when the old saint was dying, and Genseric and his Vandals put an end to its discipline and almost to its existence.

I have spoken of some churches as rigid, for we must never forget that, in the history of the early Church, the category of place is to be taken into consideration as well as that of time.‡ I have never said that there was no rigorism at all in the first five centuries, in certain places and in certain times. The same mistake which has confounded times and centuries, has also caused many writers to overlook difference of place. Many seem to forget that

* Baronius, ann. 403.

† Morinus, 6, 22, 24.

‡ The differences between churches founded by apostles, especially the Church of Rome and other churches, has been noticed by Orsi, de Capitalium criminum absolutione. See also Morinus, lib. 9, 20. Some have concluded from Tertullian that at one time sinners of some kinds were nowhere allowed absolution at all, even on their deathbeds. Both these eminent writers have completely refuted this opinion.

canons of a Council of Agde or Elliberis prove nothing but the practice of the Church in some obscure provincial town. Laws of diocesan synods are often cited with as much pomp as those of Ecumenical Councils; and the writers seem even to forget that they are no more binding on a modern cleric than we in Westminster are affected by an order emanating from a bishop in France or Italy. Considering the general tendency to neglect this principle, it is unfortunate for us that so many of the best writers of the early Church are African. Tertullian and Minucius Felix, Arnobius and Lactantius, not to speak of St Cyprian and St Augustine, in whom the saint tempered the African, all had Punic blood in their veins. Nowhere in the Roman world did Christianity make such rapid and complete progress as in Africa. At the time of the Vandal invasion there were five hundred episcopal towns, scattered over the six fair provinces which occupied the shores of the Mediterranean, from the Pillars of Hercules to where the continent slopes down towards Egypt. Carthage had churches when Rome was in the catacombs; and the cry which was raised by the mob, on the first breaking out of persecution, "Let the Christians be deprived of the churchyards," proves that the Church possessed already a recognized property. It was at a late period that Christian blood began to be shed in Africa, and the absence of danger, though favourable to the spread of the faith, had a peculiar effect on the spirit of the Christians. There was ever a strange mixture of civilization and savageness in

the African cross of the Roman blood. Carthage was so renowned for the education and the eloquence of her children that she was called the city of lawyers; yet such were the vices of those men of subtle thought and fluent tongue, that one who knew them well could only say that their passions were fiery and deep as Ætna itself. It was out of these volcanic elements that the Church was to make Christians, and to the last it must be allowed that the African Christian had something of the savageness of his origin. There was sometimes wild revelry even in feasts held over the tombs of martyrs. Who does not recognize the African in the unscrupulous intellect and the ferocious rigorism of Tertullian? It is not wonderful that the discipline of the African Church partakes of the truculency of the African character. How graphically* St Cyprian describes the furious indignation of the faithful against the apostate and the unclean, and the difficulty which, with all his influence and eloquence, he found in persuading them to allow the wretched sinners to be admitted to begin their long penance at all. He speaks of some bishops† who held that those guilty of a certain class of sins should be excluded even from the hope of absolution to their dying day. He implies,‡ in one place, that sins were punished with public penance, which in other churches would be absolved as speedily and in the same way as in the modern Church. Nay, he himself was so infected with African maxims§ as to refuse absolution to the dying who

* Ep. 54.

† Ep. 51.

‡ Ep. 11.

§ Ep. 51.

had put off confession to the time of their deathbed. No clearer proof could be required of the rigour of the African Church, and I might point to other churches for isolated examples of the same spirit, as for instance, to the canons of Neocæsarea and Elliberis, and to some decrees of Gallican bishops.

But there was one Church which never wavered in its consistent advocacy of gentleness towards sinners. While the greatest intellects in Christendom were at sea upon the question of the best way of opposing sin, while Africa and the East were rivaling each other in their severity, the Divine instinct of the See of St Peter saw what was to be done. The Vicar of CHRIST had his eyes ever fixed on the kindness of JESUS, and was kind to sinners. What a strange identity there is between the conduct of the See of Rome in all ages! But little is known about those silent Popes of the early Church. They make no speeches; they write no books; some say they did not even preach; but they knew how to make decrees to govern Christendom, and to die. While others argued, they saw; while an eloquent Cyprian holds wooden views about the sacraments, and argues plausibly enough that none but a Christian can baptize, an obscure Pope Stephen knows better the mind of CHRIST, sees that the sacrament, which is the indispensable gate of salvation, must be made as wide as possible, and proclaims that a heretic may validly baptize; he condemns his great antagonist, then goes down into the catacombs, and is tracked there by the soldiers as he is going to say Mass, and is martyred. They

were kings of men, those early Popes, over the dates and the very names of whom critics fight. All honour be to them as they lie in some unknown corner of those under-ground galleries, because they not only fought the Cæsars, but fearlessly governed Christendom, and, above all, exorcised from Christianity the spirit of rigorism. Out of the depths of Phrygia there comes a frantic asceticism, most un-Christian and worthy of the land which produced of old the worship of Cybele. It spreads all over the world; it seizes upon the greatest intellect Christianity had yet had or would have to boast of for many a long year; the mighty, reckless spirit of Tertullian. Humanly speaking, the doctrine that the Church had no power to absolve certain sins must soon have become the general belief of the Christian world. When, lo! there appeared, to the scandal of Africa and the rage of Tertullian, a decree peremptory as any that issued from the Vatican in the time of Innocent III. It declared that the Church had the power and the will to absolve the most unclean sinners. The sneers of the frantic Tertullian have had but one result; they have revealed to us, by the most unexceptionable of witnesses, the fact that the successor of St Peter assumed the title of Bishop of Bishops, and the doctrine of the Church on the power of the keys.

There lay, however, within the walls of Rome itself, a more dangerous enemy than Tertullian. Among the forty-six presbyters, who, under Pope Callistus, ruled the fifty thousand Christians of the

huge city, was one conspicuous for his brilliant talents, his great learning, and his world-wide influence with the Gentile Christians. He seems to have considered that his peculiar vocation was the conversion of the heathen. Hippolytus had gained an influence which might rival that of the spiritual ruler of the imperial city itself. All parts and all nations of the world were represented there; and when, in the eloquent peroration to a book which circumstances have rendered famous, he addresses himself to "Greeks and barbarians, Chaldeans and Assyrians, Egyptians and Libyans, Indians and Ethiopians, Celts, and all the inhabitants of Europe, Asia and Libya," he might have found living specimens of these various races in the vast stream of human beings which continually flowed through the streets of Rome. Hippolytus was a man whose virtues and whose defects were the very opposite to those of Tertullian. The rugged and mighty intellect of the Carthaginian held the same relation to the subtle and polished Greek as does a gigantic block of native granite to a graceful marble statue. While the rude African delighted chiefly in bringing out the opposition between Christianity and pagan philosophy, the genius of Hippolytus led him to attempt to win over his Grecian countrymen by metaphysical speculations on the Word of God which Plato would not have disowned. He was betrayed into language which has marked him out as one of the precursors of Arianism.* To his

* It is a remarkable instance of Father Newman's profound sagacity that, in his wonderfully learned notes to St Athanasius, he has accurately described beforehand the opinions of Hippolytus

astonishment the eloquent and learned Christian philosopher found himself condemned by the See of St Peter. The metaphysical *Logos* of Hippolytus was calmly confronted with the old creed of the Church, "I acknowledge one God,* JESUS CHRIST, and none beside Him, that was born and suffered." An ineffectual attempt to shake the fidelity of the Roman people to the Pope increased the discomfiture of the condemned philosopher, and he has left his bitter disappointment on record in a few disgraceful pages of his *Refutation of Heresies*, which bear all the marks of a Greek libel. Yet they are deeply interesting to us, as revealing through the storm of abuse and obloquy the old majestic features of the Holy See.

Yes, O Hippolytus, whoever you may be, were you even Cardinal Bishop of Portus, which it appears you were not, it is an old habit of the successor of St Peter to identify his communion with the Catholic Church,† and he will continue to do so many a long year after you and Pope Callistus are dead and gone. A runaway slave he may or may

as they may now undoubtedly be gathered from the then undiscovered *Refutation*; *vide* Translation of St Athanasius, p. 272. The authority of Hippolytus is now destroyed by the fact that he held a doctrine which was Arianism in germ, and that he was condemned by the Holy See. He became a saint only through his martyrdom. There must be some truth underneath the story of Prudentius that he was a Novatian heretic, and repented previously to his martyrdom. Historians had long been puzzled by the statement of Prudentius, when a book unexpectedly appears containing rigorist views similar to those afterwards held by the Novatians. Surely the coincidence is too remarkable to be fortuitous.

* "Refutation of Heresies," 285.

† "Refutation of Heresies," 291.

not have been, but he is now Sovereign Pontiff, and as such he has two gifts, which the Platonic mind has not, a power of judging between true doctrine and false, and a boundless love of vulgar sinners, redeemed by the blood of CHRIST. Alas! that you, O Hippolytus, should have connected your honoured name with heresy, and have forced us to class you with a frantic Tertullian. Happier in this that you expiated all this sin by a glorious martyrdom. We know that before the wild horses tore you limb from limb, you repented of your schism and your harshness to souls; but it took all the blood which you shed then to wipe off that fatal stain!*

Meanwhile we thank Hippolytus for this new insight into the character of Rome. Every fresh manuscript which is discovered only brings out the identity of the principles of the Holy See. Whether the Pope has been a banker's slave in the *Piscina Publica* in the third century, or is an Italian nobleman in the nineteenth, you find him assuming that he is the head of the Catholic Church, pronouncing doctrinal decisions, condemning intellectualism, claiming a separate jurisdiction from the civil power over marriages, and, what is most to our purpose, maintaining gentleness of discipline towards sinners. It is most instructive to find an African Tertullian and a Greek Hippolytus echoing the same invectives against the Holy See. There must be some truth in the libel, and it is this. The

* I do not forget Dr Döllinger's admirable book on the subject, to which I am much indebted. Nevertheless, in the exceeding uncertainty of the matter, I prefer following the legend.

successor of St Peter has ever been the champion of clemency towards sinners and the opponent of rigorism. While in numberless places there were rising up on every side rigorous opinions, formalizing themselves at this time in a wild Montanism, and a little later in a decorous Novatianism, the Holy See set itself like a rock to stem the torrent. We have to thank Hippolytus for a fresh link in the chain of this tradition of mercy, when he tells us that Callistus averred that he "remitted sins to all men," a practice apparently contradictory to his own. The same Pope also uttered propositions offensive to the philosophical mind;* "Yea, and he said that the parable of the cockle was spoken of by our LORD for this purpose; leave the cockle to grow with the wheat, that is, sinners in the Church. Yea, and he said that the ark of Noe was like the Church, for that there were dogs and wolves and crows in it, and clean and unclean beasts. After this fashion, according to him, things ought to be in the Church." There can be no clearer proof that the powerful and eloquent Hippolytus was a rigorist, and was condemned as such by the Holy See.

Such are the voices which come to us out of the darkness of the first centuries, at the time when the Holy See could not only assert but exercise unrestrained its rightful authority. One great evil of the times of persecution is, that it renders difficult the communication between separate churches and between the Church and her Head; and even in

* "Refutation," 290.

the fourth century, after Christianity became the established religion of the empire, the long struggle with Arianism, during which so many bishops were in exile, and their thrones occupied by usurpers, could not but throw into confusion the relations between the several parts of Christendom. This was precisely the time, as we have seen, when the discipline, especially of the Eastern Church, was most severe. At the beginning of the fifth century however, there sat upon the throne of St Peter a succession of Pontiffs such as have never been surpassed in the annals of Christianity. In these momentous sixty years, from the accession of Innocent I to the death of St Leo, during which Rome was threatened by Rhadagaisus and Attila, and sacked by Alaric and Genseric, it is wonderful to see the Popes resuming their old functions of mitigating the perpetual tendency to rigorism which existed in various churches. While Goth, Vandal, and Hun were thundering at the gates of Rome, Innocent, Celestine, and Leo are issuing decrees to all parts of Christendom to enforce upon bishops kindness to sinners. Three heresies, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism rose, and had to be put down, tumultuous councils to be managed, and emperors to be directed, yet the Popes still found time to lay down laws for the administration of the sacraments, which are the foundation of the present discipline of the Church. Whenever rigorism arose it was met by a decree of the Sovereign Pontiff. Innocent, in a letter* to Exuperius of

* *Vide* Appendix H.

Toulouse, orders the Holy Communion to be given to inveterate sinners who had put off the Sacrament of Penance to their deathbed. Celestine is told that Gallican bishops refused absolution to deathbed penitents. "We are filled with horror," he says, "that any one should be found so impious as to despair of the mercy of God. What is this but to add death to the dying, and to kill his soul by your cruelty in preventing his absolution? as though God was not ever most ready to help the sinner." Some Italian bishops compelled sinners to proclaim their sin aloud in a public penance. St Leo peremptorily forbids it as being "an act of presumption, contrary to Apostolic practice," and lays down as a general principle that secret confession to a priest is sufficient of itself. Absolution is to be given to the dying, even if they are insensible when the priest arrives, and have not been to confession for a long time before. In ancient times public penitents were in certain cases separated from their wives, compelled to give up business, and to leave the army.* St Leo virtually abrogates this ancient legislation, by declaring all this to be a matter not of precept but of counsel. Certainly, if rigorism can be charged upon any churches, in the first five centuries, it is not the fault of the Church of Rome.

Nothing can be clearer than the fact that the early Church adapted her discipline to the various wants of time and place: did she equally vary her rules at any given time to the capacity of individual souls? I have never denied that the Church of the

*Ep. ad Rusticum, Morinus, lib. 5, 24.

first five centuries was far more severe than the Church of this day; but, was she rigorous? What is the meaning of the startling canons of the councils and penitential books of the day? Where, for instance, a sinner presented himself at the feet of a priest, and confessed a sin for which was assigned a penance of even three or thirty years, was he in every case compelled to undergo the whole penance, to wait to the end of that time for absolution and the Holy Communion, without distinction of the length of the time that the habit had been upon him, of the number of times that it had been committed, or of age and sex? Was the same penance inflicted upon the man who had fallen once as on the old sinner whose habit had lasted for years? Was no account taken of the amount of temptations and of resistance, of the disposition of the individual soul, its contrition, its capacities for penance, or its weakness? The notion is incredible. Such a system of legislation, such a wooden tariff of sins could never be put into practice.

Let us endeavour to put aside imagination, and to gain an accurate view of what can be known about the penitential system of the early Church. First, let us remember that by far the greater part of mortal sins were absolved precisely in the same way as now without public penance.* During the

* See Morinus, lib. v, 2; lib. ix. 14. For discipline of Rome, *vide* Francolinus, Vet. Eccl. vind. lib. i, disp. 8. The three sins were idolatry, homicide, and *mœchia*. It may be doubted what is the precise extent of the sins indicated by the last word. That it did not mean all sins of that nature is certain. Before St Basil's time even a lapsed religious was only punished with a year's penance. Ad Amphil, can. 18.

first three centuries to three sorts of sins alone was absolution refused till such a penance had been performed. After these in some churches some other grave sins were added to the list; in the Church of Rome the number was never increased. Thus, even in the severest times, at Rome at least, all sins whatsoever of thought, and all sins of action, except three, were pardoned without exclusion from the Holy Communion. In all these cases, therefore, there was no opportunity for rigorism.

Secondly, were secret sinners, even of these three kinds, ever punished with public penance,* and therefore excluded for a long time from Holy Communion? This is one of the most difficult questions of Christian antiquity, and I do not pretend to resolve it; but one thing seems to me proved, that is, that such sinners were by no means always compelled to do public penance. In other words, the penitential laws of the Church were not universal or inexorable, but depended in practice upon the judgement formed by the priest on the dispositions of the penitent. Let us attempt to obtain a view of this part of the discipline of the Church of the first five centuries. First, then, in the earliest times of the Church, the question whether secret sinners of this description were to be compelled to do public penance by the refusal of absolution would hardly occur at all. If there be one thing more than another which strikes us in these infant Christian communities, it is their touchingly childlike simplicity. I gaze with wonder and awe at their supernatural

* *Vide* Appendix J.

gifts, at the superabundant overflow of mystical life poured out on the renewed earth by the HOLY SPIRIT, the handmaids prophesying and the young men seeing visions. But what strikes me most in all that remains of them is the strong spirit of charity which reigns among them. Each one of these Christian communities in Jerusalem and Antioch, Corinth and Rome, was like one family of brothers and sisters in the Blood of JESUS. In the midst of the rottenness of the pagan world, beneath the shade of the Acropolis of the old Greek cities, close by the temple of Aphrodite Melanis at Corinth, or the groves of Daphne, or the Serapium of Alexandria, amidst all the accumulated devilry of thousands of years, there arose little communities, which spread around them a perfume of antique purity and patriarchal simplicity. Each church looked like an expansion of the family as the Church of Corinth sprung out of the house of Stephanas. What a picture, for instance, is there in the simple words of St Ignatius to his brother bishop: "Let not the widows be neglected; for Our LORD's sake be thou their guardian, and let nothing be done without thy will, neither do thou anything without the will of GOD. Let there be frequent meetings. Seek out every man by name. Despise not slaves, be they men or women. Tell my sisters, that they live in the LORD, and that they be content with their husband's love; in like manner tell my brethren in the name of JESUS CHRIST to love their wives, as the LORD the Church. If any one is liable to remain in purity in honour of the Body of JESUS, let him not

grow proud; if he boast, he is lost. If it lead him to seek renown apart from the bishop, he is dead already. It is right when youths and maidens marry that their unions should be contracted with the bishop's consent, that the marriage may be in the LORD. Let all things be done for the honour of God. Look to the bishop that God may also look upon you." The bishop here evidently takes the place of the loving father of one great family. All religious acts seem to have been done in common as much as possible. There was but one Mass, that of the bishop, at which all the priests communicated with him, as is done even now at an ordination. The bishop was ordinarily the only confessor and director.* In such a state of things there would, probably, be no compulsion required to induce a sinner to make a public penance, which at that time would probably last but a few weeks. Brothers and sisters do not mind being reprov'd before each other; the whole spiritual family wept over and with the offender; and rejoiced at his absolution, when his brief penance was over. The question of the separation of the two *fora* would probably hardly suggest itself to the faithful, since a case would at once, with the easy consent of the interested person, pass from one to the other.† It would hardly occur to

* For instance, *vide* canon of Carthage (Morinus, p. 297), "Presbyter inconsulto episcopo non reconciliabit Pœnitentem nisi absentia Episcopi et necessitate cogente." It is worth while to notice how early the doctrine of jurisdiction occurs in the Church.

† In this sense alone can I accept the statement of Morinus, that originally the two *fora* were identical in the Church, a statement, however, which he himself qualifies in the same chapter so much as to neutralize it, lib. I, cap. 10.

them to ask whether absolution was to be denied if the sinner refused to do penance in public, since like docile children they would readily allow their spiritual father to impose upon them what penance he pleased, especially when we remember that, though the imposition of such a penance was a ceremony which took place in the church, the particular sin was always concealed.*

The difficulty, however, would be sure to arise when the spread of Christianity brought along with it more frequent sin, greater severity, and less child-like obedience. Then, indeed, it was impossible that sinners should always willingly accept public penance, and the question arose, whether they should be compelled to do such penance, without their own consent, for secret sins. It arose, it is true, far later than we should suppose, because the family feeling among Christians lasted far longer than we should be inclined to suppose.† We may, however, allow that there are many canons, especially of the fourth century, which, at least, are susceptible of being interpreted in the sense that secret sins of some kinds were, in some churches at least, publicly punished, and that without the consent of the sinner. The point on which I insist is, that in the sternest times, the rule that secret sinners might be compelled by the refusal of absolution to do public penance, assuming that it existed at all, was restricted by so many exceptions as to render it anything but universal. No public penance

* *Vide* Sozomen, quoted by Morinus, lib. ii, c. 9.

† *Vide* a remarkable passage of Tertullian, De Pæn. 10, 11.

could be imposed on a married person without the consent of his or her consort; and, what is still more remarkable, such a penance was hardly, if ever, inflicted upon the young of either sex.* Most remarkable also is the reason assigned for exempting youth from public penance, that is, on account of the frailty incident to their age. Rigorism would have drawn the very opposite conclusions. There is even a curious tradition, that no one was allowed to do public penance before the age of forty.† When these two large classes, the young, and, in many cases, the married, are exempted from the canons which enjoin public penance, an immense drawback must be made from the picture which imagination has drawn of the vast number of public penitents in the Church, even in the severest times and places. Furthermore, it is an acknowledged‡ fact that, from the fourth to the eighth century, public penitents quitted the exercise of their trades or professions. The imperial minister was no more seen at the palace, the merchant disappeared from the exchange, the soldier quitted the army. It is perfectly incredible that all secret sinners should have been submitted, against their will, to such a discipline as that. Soldiers, for instance, are not the

* Not only is this fact stated by Francolinus, Pæn. 1, 3, but it is also narrated by Morinus, lib. v, 19, 24. He speaks of canons "quibus edicitur Pœnitentiam conjugatis ex mutuo tantum consensu esse imponendam, juvenibus vero aut difficile aut nullo modo imponendam."

† Labb., tom. II, 630.

‡ Morinus, lib. 5, c. 21. He allows in that chapter that sæpissime Patres coacti sunt disciplinam relaxare. Evidently St Leo relaxed the canons for the purpose of saving the existence of public penance. c. 24.

most moral of mankind. Can we believe that all who led bad lives were compelled to do public penance, and to quit the ranks? Evidently either the canons apply only to notorious sinners, or they were infinitely modified in practice.

Still more remarkable is the fact, that it was a universal principle that no cleric was punished by public penance.* Even those who had been guilty of very grievous sins were allowed to communicate immediately after absolution. From this fact I draw two conclusions, which seem to me evident: first, that the canons acknowledged the wide principle, that sins materially the same were variously punished according to the various conditions of the sinner; and secondly, that the reception of the Blessed Sacrament by sinners, very soon after the sin, was not foreign to the views of the early Church. Thus, not even the strictest canons are indiscriminate; they do not involve in one universal sentence all sinners, without distinction of individual conditions. Even in Carthage, the most rigorous of all churches, a distinction is recognized between secret and public sins.† Altogether, it seems to me impossible to reconcile the various authorities on the subject without supposing that, in the actual administration of the severest laws, it was left to the bishop or the priest to determine

* *Διάκονος μετὰ τὴν διακονίαν πορνεύσας ἀποβλητὸς μὲν τῆς διακονίας ἔσται εἰς δὲ τὸν τῶν λαϊκῶν τόπον ἀπωσθεὶς κῆς κοινῶνας οὐκ εἰρχθήσεται*, St Basil, Ep. 188. That *κοινωνία* means the Holy Eucharist is plain from a comparison with the very remarkable canon, 79, among the reputed Nicene canons. Labb., tom. II, 979; Morinus, lib. 9, 14.

† Canon 32, Labbe, tom. II, 885.]

whether, in the particular instance, it would not be best for the soul of the sinner to temper and to moderate them.

It is evident, then, that "*Sacramenta propter homines*" was not forgotten by the Church in her discipline with respect to the publicity of penance. But it extended also to every branch of her penitential system. It seems as though, after the Church, in her severest mood, had made the strictest decrees, she at once grew compassionate, when it became necessary to apply them to the individual sinners. Cite me any portion of her discipline, and I will undertake to show you how she modified it when it came to actual practice. Nothing astonishes us so much in the ancient Church as the passages of the Fathers which seem to assert that the Sacrament of Penance was allowed only once to sinners. I fully believe that this means public penance as contrasted with secret, which was reiterated no matter how often. But, be this as it may, there are instances on record of the frequent reception of relapsed sinners, of a class to which you would have supposed that the Church would have been peculiarly severe. Over and over again did Cerdon, the heretic, deceive the Church by a false repentance, yet the excommunicated man was received with open arms whenever he returned. When we remember how often heresy involved sins of another kind,* this fact goes far to neutralize the startling passages to which we allude. Marcion had been

* As in the case of the women mentioned by St Irenæus, Lib. i, c. 9.

excommunicated for a sin of a heinous nature; he was re-admitted to the bosom of the Church, and then fell into heresy, yet he was again received, notwithstanding his relapse. Either, then, no such rule existed in the early Church,* or else she was, according to St Alphonso's maxim, a lion in public, a lamb in the confessional.

Take, again, what startles us as much as anything—the length of time during which, according to the penitential canons, heinous sinners were kept without absolution, and consequently without communion. Innumerable are the instances in which we see the verification of the assertion of Morinus, that in cases in which, according to the ordinary law of the Church, absolution would have been deferred, “sometimes it, as well as communion, were given at once, even to most wicked men.” It was an understood principle in early times that martyrs and confessors could grant indulgences to public penitents, that is, by the application of their own sufferings could procure absolution to sinners who had not fulfilled their term of penance. Even the sneers of Tertullian cannot spoil the beautiful picture on which our imagination loves to dwell of sinners crowding to the prisons for mitigation of their penance, while the martyrs rejoiced in their

* The chief authority for the opinion is the Pastor of Hermas. It seems to me that that book does not represent the discipline of the Church, but that which the author desires to introduce, and which could not be introduced without the authority of private revelations. We might as well insert St Gertrude's visions in the Corpus Juris as adduce the Pastor as a proof of the legislation of the Church. There is a curious instance of penance being allowed more than once in the seventy-ninth canon of Nicæa, quoted above.

sufferings, not only because they shed their blood for JESUS, but because they could restore the Holy Communion to the longing souls of their erring brethren.* How touching is the letter written by Celerius, a Roman Christian, to Lucian, a Carthaginian sufferer, waiting for death in prison. The Roman entreats him to restore to the altar Numeria and Candida, two Christians, for whose weak woman's nature the persecution had been too strong. Even without the martyr's prayers, the Church often remitted the penalty to sinners, and restored them to the Blessed Sacrament long before their time. Who does not remember the clemency of Pope Cornelius to the fallen? It had all been settled in solemn council; during the vacancy of the Holy See the Roman clergy had written to St Cyprian to recommend severity, so many and so scandalous had been the apostacies during the terrible persecutions. Carthage had seen assembled all the bishops of Africa, in no way loth to exercise their virtuous indignation on the fallen sinners. Fully did the apostates deserve the severe sentence passed upon them, and the Carthaginian clergy had the satisfaction of knowing that the Roman clergy had resolved on the same stringent measures. Hardly, however, was St Cornelius seated on the throne † of St Peter, when Africa was scandalized by the news that, in his compassion, he had given absolution and Holy Communion to all the apostates. St Cyprian attempts to soothe his angry colleagues by saying that the fact was untrue. Yet he cannot

* Orsi, sec. 3, cap. 35.

† Ep. 51.

deny that a great part of the fallen had already been allowed to communicate. Cornelius had granted absolution to Trophimus, a notorious apostate priest, and to a large number with him. Rome was ever steadfast to her traditions of mercy. Even in Africa the canons could not be carried out, St Cyprian writes to reprove Victor, a priest, for having granted absolution to a sinner after a very brief penance; and St Cyprian himself received back the penitent apostates in a short time on the approach of persecution.

But we have more direct proof of the fact that the laws of the Church, with respect to the length of penance, were modified according to the dispositions of the individual. Whether you consult the Hagiology or the Councils, or the Fathers of the Church of the first five centuries, you find proofs of the shortening of the duration of penance, in spite of the penitential canons. The intimate life of the Church is often better known from the lives of the saints than from more stately histories. Who that has read the lives of the Desert Saints does not remember St Mary of Egypt? She had broken the laws of God, and all possible canons of the Church. After scandalizing Alexandria, she transferred to the Holy City, at the holiest time, the abomination of her presence. The Blessed Virgin converts her, by a stroke of grace, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Heart-broken, she walks all night, and reaches the valley of the Jordan in the morning. There and then, in the church on the banks of the stream, she receives at once the Holy Communion.

In one night of penance the sinful creature had expiated years of sin. According to the canons, many a long year must have passed before her absolution. Take, again, the stories told in the lives of the Saints of the Desert, of sinners going to the Holy Communion. Some had been guilty of one of these three sins, for which, universally, according to law, a long public penance was to be done. Yet when, after* a brief time of secret repentance, they received the Blessed Sacrament, their bodies were seen luminous and resplendent as an angel. Most significant are these facts. The lives of the Desert Saints are the popular devotional reading of the fourth and fifth centuries; and such stories prove that there was nothing startling to the minds of Christians in the fact of a sinner going at once, on his conversion, to the Holy Communion.

If we turn back to the legislation of the Church, surely all the touching exhortations in the apostolical constitutions, by which a bishop is conjured to be merciful to sinners, imply that the length of their penance was in his hands. Even St Basil writes to Amphilochius, that, "he to whom God in His mercy has given the power of binding and loosing, will not be condemned if he mercifully diminishes the time of the penances imposed, when the penitent is fervent." And long before St Basil, an authority even greater than he, in her first Œcumenical Council, the Church, just recovering from persecution, takes advantage of the first settled peace to decree mercy to sinners. She orders

* Rosweide, pp. 524, 648.

absolution always to be given to the dying.* She expressly leaves to the bishop the modification of penitential laws, especially with respect to the length of penance, as also do the Councils of Ancyra and Laodicea.†

When, however, we turn from the decrees of Councils to the writings of the Fathers, the case seems plainer still. Legislation is necessarily dry, colourless, and abrupt: the question is, how was the law put into practice? We have seen how much was left to the discretion of the minister of the sacrament, how he might modify and temper the law not only as to the publicity, but as to the duration of this penance. It is, therefore, most important to make out what was the spirit of the Fathers in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance. Did they act as though they thought that the time of penance depended not on the law but on the dispositions of the penitent? Did they modify the law according to the merits of the individual? Did they even acknowledge the principle that the burden imposed upon the sinner is to be suited to his strength, and that his frailty is to be taken into consideration? Here again imagination has played tricks with us. We gaze with awe upon those great saints through the lapse of ages; we remember how they withstood barbarian kings and civilized emperors, and we think that they must have been stern. We are caught by the grave and solemn music of their Greek and Latin, and we see them

* Canon 12. Labbe, tom. II, 674.

† Canon 5, tom. II, 515. Canon 2, tom. II, 563.

presiding over councils, throned and mitred, with stole and pallium. They appear before us lofty, resplendent, even terrible in their virginal majesty, like the mountains in their eternal snow, high above us, immovable and cold, flashing back from their foreheads the pure light of heaven. We forget their love of souls.* Here they become at once human and saint-like. This is the key to the heart of the early Church, and the token of its union with the Heart of JESUS. We praise the undaunted courage of St Ambrose in imposing penance on the guilty emperor; we forgot his compassion in admitting him to the Holy Communion, after a short penance of eight months, though, according to the canons, he should have been excommunicated for at least twenty years. How touching is it to hear a great St Chrysostom avow that he fled from the Episcopate, for fear of not being able to deal with sinners as kindly as he should? His whole book on the priesthood is the cry of terror of a loving heart, trembling lest it should not love sufficiently to please JESUS. Yet we know that his enemies accused him of laxity towards sinners. How well he understood the effeminate beings with whom he had to deal, and how fully he was prepared to condescend to their weakness!† He is talking of the difficulty of bringing sinners to repentance. "The law gives us no power," he says, in significant words, "to compel them to do penance, and if it did, we could not use it. What, then, is a man to do? If you are

* A beautiful instance of this love of souls is to be found at the end of St Gregory Nazianzen's thirty-ninth oration.

† *De Sacerdotio*, ii, c. 3, 4.

too gentle with one who wants a severe amputation you leave half the wound unhealed; but if you unsparingly use the knife, the pain drives him to despair, he tears away the bandages, flings himself headlong into all evil, casts away all restraint, and breaks in pieces the salutary yoke." Nevertheless, the saint boldly accepts the alternative of mildness. "I could tell you of many," he says, "who have utterly perished in desperate sins, because a penance was put upon them in proportion to their misdeeds. Punishment ought not to be exacted precisely also according to the measure of a man's sins; you must judge of the dispositions of the sinner, lest in trying to patch up a rent you make the tear worse, and in hastening to raise the fallen, you cast him down more violently. Where you have to do with frail and effeminate persons, brought up in all the delicacies of the world, yea, and proud of their birth and power, you may convert them from their sins by little and little, if not perfectly, yet so as to free them partly from the evils under which they suffer, whilst, if you attempt to correct them violently, you deprive them of that little amelioration." Could he declare in plainer words how much he hated rigorism, and how distinctly he realized the principle, that the weakness of the sinner should be taken into account in the imposition of the penance? In one of his homilies, when exhorting his hearers to frequent communion, he says, that "a preparation of five days is enough even for a man burdened with a very heavy load of sin." It is a favourite maxim of his, that "duration of time is

not necessary for penance." "Think not," he says, "of the shortness of the time, but of the goodness of God." Take also an ancient writer often quoted under the name of St Jerome. "When the canons fix the measure of time for doing penance, they do not mean clearly to lay down how each sin is to be corrected, but they leave it to the discretion of the priest, for God does not look so much to the length of time as to the depth of grief, nor to the abstinence from food so much as to the mortification of sin."

But the most certain sound comes from the chair of St Peter. Innocent declares that the priest has power of dismissing the penitent as soon as he judges that his satisfaction is sufficient.* But there is one voice above all, clear and unmistakable; it is that before which the hordes of Huns rolled back from the North of Italy. "The time of penance," writes St Leo † to a bishop, "is to be settled by your judgement, according as you see the devotion with which sinners turn to God." "Penance," he says, "is not to be judged of by time, but by the compunction of the heart." Nay, he is careful not to make the sacrament odious; he legislates for the weakness of sinners, and gives it as a reason for severely forbidding all public enumeration of secret sins. For this reason he lays down as a fundamental axiom, that for secret sins confession to God and to a priest is sufficient.‡ Practically speaking, then, we can gain a sufficiently clear insight into the

* Ep. i, Labbe, tom. III, 1029.

† Ep. 129, ad Nicetam.

‡ Ep. 136.

discipline of the early Church. In spite of the speculative difficulties which surround us in the interpretation of the canons, we can tell what would be the reception which a young man who had committed great sins would meet with from his confessor, in the fourth or fifth centuries. He would not be forced to do public penance. The length of his private penance would depend a great deal on the character of the priest to whom he applied. If he made his confession to St Basil, a considerable time would probably elapse before he received the Holy Communion. If a young Milanese threw himself at the feet of St Ambrose,* the saint would have shed floods of tears, as though he himself were the sinner, and would have so moved him to compunction that he would soon have been fit to be absolved. If he had gone to St Chrysostom, he would have said, "My child, do penance for your sins; come to me in a few days and you shall be absolved, and receive your LORD."† But whether he was in Cesarea or Constantinople, his confessor would not judge him by rigid rules, but would absolve him sooner or later, according to the measure of his contrition.

Such was the Church's period of severity, and such was its result. It lasted from about the middle of the third century to the end of the fourth, or the first half of the fifth. Even while it lasted it never degenerated into rigorism; it was infinitely modified by the love of souls. In the East it finished

* *Vide* Life by Paulinus.

† *Vide* Orat. 6, ad S. Philogonium.

with Nectarius; in the West, where it had never been so severe, its existence was prolonged, but it was penetrated and neutralized by the merciful maxims of the Popes, and public penance assumed more and more the appearance and the rarity of a religious profession.*

It was tried once more under very different auspices. What had been given up as impracticable, when the Church had to deal with the courtiers of Eudoxia, was attempted by a sect on those of Louis XIV.

It cannot be denied that if an uncompromising severity is the best method of winning sinners to GOD, the French of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were fit subjects for its exercise. All over Europe, wherever it had penetrated, the Reformation had left behind it a terrible dissoluteness of manners. A series of unprincipled reigns from Francis I to Henry III had greatly injured the national character, and Henry IV brought a soldier's licence as well as a soldier's virtues to the throne. The religion and the piety of Louis XIII were not sufficiently amiable or vigorous to remedy the evil. The memoirs of the time reveal the growing corruption of the aristocracy of France. The popu-

* It is very curious to see how this was the case even from the time of Pope Siricius. For instance, a runaway penitent is punished like an apostate monk; and, what is still more strange, no married person can enter the class of penitents unless the innocent consort enters it with him, precisely as is the case with married persons taking religious vows. That provisions such as these should be applied to the generality of the faithful is perfectly incredible, especially if we reflect that the age of primitive fervour was long past, and that vice was, unfortunately, by no means rare.

larity of many of the heroines of that memorable time was evidently not injured by their want of respectability. Vice was fast ceasing to be infamous. But there were deeper depths to be reached on our way to the regency and the Parc aux Cerfs. I turn with horror even from the first brilliant years of Louis XIV. For many a previous reign the vices of the court had been gnawing into the heart of France; but it was not then the all-absorbing vortex which it afterwards became, when all France lay at the feet of her absolute, young, and brilliant king. We are accustomed to look upon the court of Charles II as the very acme of all that is bad; but it was rivalled, if not surpassed, by that of his more glorious cousin. It does not diminish our horror when we recollect that Louis was the most Christian king. Paschal Communion only renders the subsequent triumph of returning sin more odious. I cannot thoroughly enjoy Bossuet's splendid recitative when I remember who is in the royal chapel in the train of the injured queen, and how ineffectual is his eloquence. But we will not dwell on the dishonour of the fleurs-de-lis.

How was the Church to grapple with this enormous evil? By renewing the canons of the ancient Church, and by excommunicating Louis XIV? Alas! we are not in the Middle Ages. The world, since Philip the Fair, has been doing its best to neutralize the authority of the Church; it is too late for it to turn round upon her and reproach her for not using it. Was the Holy See to lay France under an interdict? But interdicts can only be laid

on a thoroughly faithful people. They consist in using the public opinion of Christendom against a wicked ruler—what if public opinion itself is corrupt? The Parisian world, which could bear in the comedies of Molière one long satire on the sanctity of marriage, would hardly have been a fit subject for the experiment. It is all very well to expect some modern Ambrose to thrust the new Theodosius out of Notre Dame. Gallicanism, however, is not prolific of Ambroses, and would Theodosius have obeyed? You might look long for the saint of Milan amongst the members of those amphibious assemblies of the clergy, adorned by the character and eloquence of Bossuet, really managed by the clever and scandalous De Harlay. And after all, the Church might pause and ask herself whether severity was best for the sinner's soul? It was tried by the Archbishop of Sens, an ally of the Jansenists, and by no means an Ambrose. When the king was at Fontainebleau, he renewed the ancient censures of the Church against sinners. The king quietly retired to Versailles, beyond the bounds of the prelate's diocese. On the other hand, his conversion was at last effected by gentle means.

It needed no Jansenism to teach the Church how to deal with the difficult problem. There lay a fund of faith in the heart of the French nation, which has carried it through many fiery trials, and preserved the Church in spite of the Revolution. All that was good in the French nobility was Christian and Catholic; Protestantism or Jansenism could only spoil without deeply affecting them. They

were very different from the degenerate men and the effeminate races with which the early Church had to deal. There was something really great in the Condés and Turennes, and in the noble soldiers who afterwards fought at Steinkirk and Landen, something even heroic in the way in which they rallied round the sinking throne of Louis, and died at Blenheim and at Ramillies. All this natural goodness might have been and often was turned on the side of GOD. Very much has been done amongst them, from that time until now, by seizing upon the good points of their nature, and employing their restless activity in the service of GOD. Such was the secret found by St Vincent of Paul. The fine ladies of that wicked luxurious Paris were induced by him to sympathize with the frightful miseries of the poor, and healed the wounds of their own souls, while their hands tended the suffering bodies of their fellow Christians. Duchesses d'Aiguillon and Countesses of Joigny climbed up into the miserable garrets of the poor, and were kept close to GOD amidst the vices of the court. Many a young French nobleman shed his blood for Christendom, and perished fighting in Candia against the Turks. Others, like a Duke of Beaufort, "king of the rabble," in times of the Fronde, put their brilliant courage to better account in an expedition against Algiers, and succeeded in liberating hundreds of Christian slaves. Olier helped on St Vincent's work. He formed confraternities of gentlemen and ladies who assisted him in the reformation of his wide parish of St Sulpice. He induced numbers to join in the

foundation of Villemarie, or Montreal, in Canada, to form a bulwark for the rising Christianity of North America against the Iroquois, and for the conversion of the savages. Such was the plan of the Church. It never repelled the amiable, clever, and really noble Frenchman by an assumption of rigour. It employed them in good works, and thus kept them close to the sacraments. If you do not allow them to wander far from God, some day even the bad ones will return. There were often striking conversions in the worst of days. Henrietta of England, she who inspired Bossuet with accents of genuine grief which even yet move our hearts, died sweetly kissing her crucifix. Anne of Gonzaga was wonderfully brought back to God in the midst of her reckless life. Who has not heard of the long penance of Sister Louise de la Miséricorde, once Duchess de la Vallière? Many a soul, stricken, wounded, and suffering, amidst the splendour of Versailles, was brought back to God by the merciful theology of the Church.

Upon all this great work came the reign of Jansenism, chilling, dry, withering, like a perpetual east wind. It was the same kind of movement as the reaction of Puritanism in England against the dissoluteness of the Cavaliers; and, like its English counterpart, it fell in with a ready-made political party to protect and to help it on. The ancient simplicity of French manners, spoiled first by the Renaissance, and then by the licence of the civil wars, still lingered in many a provincial chateau, amongst the smaller nobility, but above all, had

taken refuge among the legal families, the nearest approach to a great middle class in France. It was out of the unnatural union of this latter party with discontented nobles that sprung the Fronde, and of the débris and detritus of the Fronde came the strength of the Jansenist party. Hence its motley character, hence the monstrous union of Rigorism and De Retz, and the strange juxtaposition of the perfumes of Madame de Sablé and the dirt of the Mère Angelique.

Such was the disreputable origin of modern rigorism; let us now examine its characteristics, and contrast them with those of the early Church. It was very early in the history of Jansenism that its doctrines with respect to the sacraments made their appearance. The propositions taken out of the Augustinus by Cornet, for the purpose of denouncing them to the Holy See, were originally seven, and among the two, withdrawn in order to reduce the examination within the smallest compass possible, was one which asserted that public penance was essential to the sacrament, and that secret confession was invalid.* It is not hard to discover the parentage of the opinion. The prodigal out-pouring of the precious Blood in the sacraments, the instantaneous and infinitely reiterated pardon given in absolution; above all, the universal love of JESUS for sinners implied in His unconstrained union of Himself with them in the Holy Communion, were all utterly incompatible with a doctrine which laid

* *Vide* Dumas' " Histoire des Five Propositions," p. 6, Faillon, " Vie de M. Olier," p. 184, tom. II.

down as its fundamental principle that Christ did not die for all men, but only for the elect. Again, all doctrines which teach any kind of Calvinistic election necessarily require some mark to distinguish the elect from the reprobate, and some method of distinguishing the converted from those still out of favour with God. The enthusiasm of a Methodist conversion was suited neither to the frigid genius of Jansenism, nor compatible with the possibility of remaining within the bosom of the Church. A long suspension from Communion under a Jansenist director, became thus the shibboleth of the sect, the mark of thorough conversion to God.

These doctrines might long have slumbered in the Augustinus if they had not been transmuted into French by Antoine Arnauld, then a young doctor of the Sorbonne. In 1643, the year of the death of Richelieu, by order of St Cyran, appeared "*La Fréquente Communion.*" The book made the fortune of Jansenism. Up to that time its character for severe virtue had been confined to the nuns of Port Royal and a few devotees, directed by St Cyran. It now flew far and wide over France. It drew from some distant provinces of France, where the civilization of the capital had never penetrated, some seigneurs and country gentlemen, who wished to repent of lives spent in wild debauchery. A few old soldiers, one or two bad priests happily converted, some barristers of repute, and some physicians in full practice, gave up the world, settled down as hermits in the valley of Port Royal, and edified the world by their earnestness and penance.

These men were the penitential capital of Jansenism. But what was the effect of the book upon the world?

St Francis of Sales had lived and died so lately and his influence was too living for Arnauld to dare openly to avow the purpose which we have seen expressed by Jansenius. The blundering honesty of the Belgian could not be imitated in France. The principles taught by St Philip in Rome had come across the Alps, through Piedmont and Savoy, and had electrified France. From that little mountain district in the Chablais, and from the borders of the dark lake of Annecy, there came a spirit of love which to this day impregnates the devotion of the French people. Frequent communion was a first principle which Arnauld dared not openly attack. He says that he does not want to prevent the good from receiving their LORD often; his only aim is to establish the principle, that a sinner should, whenever he committed a mortal sin, be suspended from communion for at least a few months, "in order afterwards to communicate frequently." He positively disclaims the desire either to curtail communions, or to bring back the ancient discipline of the early Church.

O Antoine Arnauld, man of inexorable logic, let it suffice you to have had the honour of measuring swords with Malebranche, but do not dabble in theology! Your talents are essentially pugnacious and forensic, and like many controversialists, you care more for making out your point than for the truth! If you do not want to re-establish the dis-

cipline of the ancient Church, how is it that, wherever they dare, Jansenists do make the attempt? Why, in the parish of St Méry, in Paris, are there men and women standing outside the church on a Sunday during the Mass because the priest has excommunicated them? Why, to the ridicule of all France, has the Archbishop of Sens promulgated the extinct laws of obsolete discipline? Why is the diocese of Aleth in an uproar because Bishop Pavillion, with head and heart as hard as the rocks of its volcanic mountains, has restored public penance, and has tried the experiment on several wild seigneurs, who, it must be confessed, richly deserved it? O Antoine! are you inconsistent or are you untruthful? As for myself, I have too great a respect for your talents, and I know your long career too well, not to believe in your want of veracity rather than logic.*

But he is gone to his account. Let us analyse his book, and we shall have a complete picture of modern rigorism, and be able to judge how, in every respect, it is diametrically opposed to the principles of the early Church.

First, his system is inflexible. It could not be otherwise. The two motive principles, the one of which is the origin, the other the check upon the flexibility of the confessional, were utterly absent from his mind. The love of souls was physically impossible in the heart of one who held that JESUS did not die for all. The love of Rome would have been a strange inconsistency in an extreme Gallican,

* *Vide* Appendix K: On Jansenist insincerity.

who looked upon each bishop as a St Peter on his own particular rock. We are not, therefore, surprised if, in terms of indignant eloquence, he lays it down that the discipline of the Church is invariable and inexorable.*

Secondly, he never consistently looks upon the sacraments as remedies for human frailty. In conformity with this principle, he lays down rules which are the destruction of frequent communion. He first declares that no one is to receive the Blessed Sacrament who has not the purest love of God, without any admixture. All are to be driven from the altar whose hearts are not entirely purified from the very images of their former sins, who are not perfectly united to God alone, and entirely irreproachable. When we remember that, according to Arnauld, this purest love of God is the necessary disposition† for communion, we may well ask who then is to communicate? No wonder his contemporaries called the book, "*l'Infréquente Communion*."

With respect to sinners, he lays it down as a rule that no sinner should receive the Holy Communion till the habit of sin is destroyed. He considers it essential to the Sacrament of Penance that the penance should be accomplished before absolution can be received. This is founded as well upon the essential order of things in the Spirit of God as upon

* He says, indeed, in one place, that as a wise physician the Church may give to her sick children the medicine which she knows they will not refuse; but Petavius has shown his gross inconsistency.

† "*Fréq. Com.*" 1, 5, 6.

the laws of God's justice. Nay, the principal object of the Sacrament of Penance is not pardon to the sinner, but the satisfaction of God's justice. Every single mortal sin thus involves a separation from communion which he himself recommends should last several months.* Who does not see that with such principles frequent communion becomes impossible? If the purest love of God is a necessary condition for a good communion; if each separate mortal sin involves a long penance and a long privation of the Blessed Sacrament, the altars of the Church must inevitably remain solitary and abandoned. For once Arnauld tells the truth when he says that few indeed would be allowed to communicate, if all were rejected from the altar who ought to be rejected according to the spirit of the Church.†

It was necessary to dwell upon Arnauld's principles, because they are in fact the principles of all rigorism. I have drawn out the difference between Jansenism and the early Church, because there is no doubt that a certain prejudice is created in favour of rigorism by what lies on the surface of that part of the early Church history which is best known. It is certain that Arnauld's book make a great impression even upon those of his contemporaries who were not of his party. In vain did Petavius demolish the learning of Arnauld. His old-world French and cumbrous logic were no match for his opponent's nervous style and indignant assump-

* "Frég. Com." Preface, p. 15.

† "Frég. Com." 1, 23.

tion of injured innocence. There remain for a long time marks of the influence both of the Provincials and of the Fréquente Communion in some of the best writers of the French Church. I hear echoes of it in the thunderbolts hurled from the talons of the eagle of Meaux. There is a want of unction and tenderness, a sustained and dignified unbending severity in the sermons of the period, which unpleasantly smacks of rigorism. The fact is, we are all rigorists by nature. It is not necessary to be a Jansenist predestinarian to have a touch of the pharisee in us. Nay, the very opposite doctrine, which pares down the consequences of the fall, exaggerates the strength of the will, and forgets the fickleness of fallen nature, is logically just as rigorist as Jansenism.

And the world, which is neither logical nor Jansenist, salved its conscience by rigorist principles and laxity of action.* Young ladies slyly read "*La Fréquente*," as it was called in Jansenist slang, because it came under the category of naughty books. Dissolute young men eagerly took up the doctrine, that suspension from communion was the best of penances, more meritorious than fasting or almsgiving.† It is instructive to remember the occasion on which Arnauld's book was written. The Princess de Guémené refused to go to a ball on the day of her communion, under the auspices of a Jansenist director.‡ Another lady, thinking this strange, applied to her own director, who wrote

* Cousin, "*Vie de la Marquise de Sablé*," p. 59.

† "*Fréq. Com.*" II, 23.

‡ This is Ste Beuve's account of the matter.

her a letter to prove that the ball and the communion were not incompatible. Out of the correspondence which resulted, sprung Arnauld's book. Not otherwise noteworthy to us this quarrel between two ladies of the court of Anne of Austria, two centuries ago, if it did not reveal the fact that the princess was allowed by her director to receive the Holy Communion. O Madame de Guémené, of the two it would have been better for you to go to the ball, and not to approach the altar! You are of those who strain at gnats and swallow camels. From what De Retz tells us of you, if you had knelt in St Alphonso's confessional, you would have gone away unabsolved. Rigorism ever leads to laxity from its want of principle.

Once more, rigorism never dies. If it were not for the kindred Pharisaism of our nature, Jansenism would long have been consigned to the huge Don-daniel of oblivion. So much nonsense could not still be written about it, if it did not flatter some part of our original sin. I have known men, excellent men too, in France, who did not go to communion even at Easter on account of the principles of dread which had been instilled into them in their youth. As for us priests, Heaven defend us from rigorism. Let us remember that the unerring logic of history has led us to this conclusion. The true spirit which should guide us in the distribution of the Holy Communion is, first of all, an ardent love of souls, and the continued recollection of the infinite compassion of JESUS for their frailty. The contradictory to rigorism is flexibility in the application of

laws to the wants of individual souls, the whole checked and controlled by obedience to Rome. Without it, the administration of the sacraments of GOD's love would degenerate into a sort of Presbyterian cutty-stool.

CHAPTER III. THE COMMUNIONS OF THE IMPERFECT

WE have now finished the historical part of our work. We have wandered painfully through systems of philosophy and wide tracts of history. Some of us may remember many years ago, how our boyish imagination was deeply impressed with the account of Spaniards groping their way through the tangled mazes of a West Indian forest, with a host of Caribs pursuing them. Such seems to be the journey of a man who has once got into the tangled thickets of theory. It is little enough that he can see of the light of the sun, for the tall giants of the forest, in their attempt to reach heaven with their tops, have shut it out. The very luxuriance of all this earthly growth has taken captive the beautiful light as in a net, so that it can hardly struggle down through the wilderness of their broad leaves, and the thick undergrowth of wild vines and flowery creepers which clasp them round. It all looks very beautiful, but a man, if he wants to make his way to the free air beyond, must laboriously carve his road foot by foot through the matted mass of hopeless jungle. Nay, what light there is only shows black pools, and quivering swamps, where a poor soul may drown amid spotted snakes and loathsome caymans. Earth quakes beneath our feet, and heaven is hid. Fresh obstacles to truth pullulate out of the activity of an intellect which creates its own difficulties the farther we go. Better, perhaps, never to have entangled ourselves at all in such a labyrinth. Yet it was all for the glory of the Blessed

Sacrament. We in England can hardly be dispensed from entering that forest to hunt for souls. There is many a noble creature of God wandering amidst the old swamps and rank labyrinths of human error; and we must go thither to hunt for them. With the risk of running my metaphor to death, I cannot help remembering how beautiful was Corpus Christi in Paraguay, with the tropical flowers breathing out their odorous lives, and the green birds fluttering, and lithe leopards playing around the procession; and, better than all, Christian Indians singing sweet hymns, and bowing the knee before JESUS in the Sacrament of His love. Ah! it is worth while to go down into the most dismal swamp, and to thread the paths of the most tangled wood to save one soul.

However, we breathe more freely now that we have done. All this work has not been worthless for ourselves. We have even a clearer idea of the blessed truth than we had before. We have laid down principles which will help us now. Above all, I hope that our long historical research has given us a vivid view of the practice of the Church and a truthful picture of rigorism. We have now done with both theory and history. We are going to apply practically the principles which we have gained. I shall not be so solicitous about order and method as hitherto. I shall only treat in an unscientific way a few prominent questions with respect to Holy Communion.

There is one question which seems to me the turning-point of the whole doctrine of spiritual writers about Holy Communion: Are habitual imperfec-

tions an obstacle to frequent communion? Let us examine this question together; it will throw great light upon the whole subject.*

In order that there may be no mistake, I premise two things. Frequent communion is a relative term, the meaning of which depends upon the custom of the age. In the Middle Ages once a month, in the time of St Francis of Sales once a week would be considered frequent. In our time, according to the general estimation, a Christian who communicated once a week would not be considered a frequent communicant. I am not, therefore, asking whether a person who is ordinarily exempt from mortal sin, but has still some affection for venial sin, may communicate every week. That I take for granted. I assume, as certain, that all ordinarily good Christians may communicate once a week.† The question which we are considering, then, may be stated thus: Is a person who is really imperfect to be prevented from communicating more than once a week?

Secondly, I mean really imperfect. I am not talking of scruples, that is, of acts which the doer

* It is important never to forget the condemnation of the following proposition by Alexander VIII. "*Consuetudo moderna quoad administrationem Sacramenti Pœnitentiæ, etiamsi eam plurimorum hominum sustenet auctoritas et multi temporis diuturnitas confirmet nihilominus ab Ecclesia non habetur pro usu sed abusu.*"

† "Never have I regarded weekly Communion as frequent," says St Alphonso; "that person alone who communicates several times a week is considered to be a frequent communicant." It is very important to remember this maxim of the saint. It is evident that many more good Christians might communicate weekly if they were not withheld by traditionary rigorism.

looks upon as sins, but which are not really so. I mean downright habitual venial sin. Nor do I address myself to the scrupulous, that is, to persons who dispense themselves from fighting against their most real sins, by occupying themselves with imaginary ones. These persons are not to be argued with at all, for they are incapable of reason. Miserable caricatures of the spiritual life, abnormal products of the religious world as monsters are of the natural, they are to be treated like half-witted creatures, kindly, of course, yet without any appeal to their common sense which does not exist. I have nothing to do with them just now, but with another class, who are often treated as though they were scrupulous, but who are not really so; those who are painfully conscious of imperfections which are by no means unreal, which are not to be despised, but to be strenuously fought against.

Let us imagine, then, a person of this description thus addressing his or her confessor. To make matters clearer, we will suppose it to be one of a class often considered to be ordinarily incapable of frequent communion, a married lady, a wife and a mother. This, therefore, is what she says:—

I know that I wish to love God; I am as certain of it as I can be of anything whatsoever. I feel a great drawing towards Him; I have a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and a desire for the Holy Communion. I feel an attraction for prayer. I can spend some time with pleasure before the tabernacle. At the same time I cannot persuade myself that I am fit to communicate often. I have

no saintly aspirations. I love my husband and children intensely, and I am happy in their love. At the same time, I am distinctly conscious of numberless imperfections. I feel within myself continual movements of pride and sensitiveness, irritability and resentment. I am easily scandalized, and I form harsh and hasty judgements. I am slothful and effeminate, fastidious and hard to please. In a word, there is nothing extraordinary about me; I am better, it may be, than some, because I have no temptation to great sins; but it would be absurd to say that I am getting the better of my imperfections, or that I do all that I possibly can to overcome them. I struggle against them, and I wish with all my heart to be better, but I still remain the same. Do you mean to tell me that I am fit to go often to communion? In vain you call me inconsistent, on the ground that on my own principles I am not worthy to communicate even as often as I do. After all, a person who receives the Holy Communion twice a week ought to be better than one who communicates once a month. I know what the Blessed Sacrament is; I cannot approach Him without fear. Would you have me not fear God? Others may make up their conscience to communicate often, but I cannot.

Now, I will begin by allowing that there is much truth in what is here said, and that such feelings cannot be simply dismissed or despised; and I will try first to separate the truth from the error.

Do I not wish you to fear God? Heaven forbid that you should not. Who can help fearing Him?

The only difficulty is to restrain this terror within due bounds, and not to fall down crushed and overwhelmed at the very thought of God. I, for one, have no sympathy with optimism. Where are we to find shelter from the eye of God? Surely, least of all, in a good conscience. There was a time when some of us were full of hope, when all the treasures of the Church lay at our feet, and we dreamed of being saints, and of doing great things for God. But now, when we look at the sad reality, when, after years of feeble, impotent struggling, we find self as unsubdued as ever, and the same catalogue of meanness and unfaithfulness in God's service meets us at the close of every day, there is much danger, lest a simple, desolate recklessness should take the place of our aspirations after perfection. No wonder if the more real a soul is, the more it rises above what I cannot help calling the unreality of some devout persons, the more also it shrinks from such a frequency of communion as would be likely to degenerate into a portion of the mere mechanism of spirituality.

You see I have granted you a great deal, perhaps more than you asked. Yet you are wrong if the practical conclusion which you draw from all this is that your communions should be few and far between. In the first place, there is much which is wrong in this fretful petulance. All this savageness with self is a violent outburst of disappointed nature. Nay, I strongly suspect there is a good deal of rash judgement of your neighbours. I allow that some devout persons may be tiresome and narrow

mind, that there is much that is unreal in their worship of their directors, yet, for all that, I cannot help thinking that, with all their folly, they are more pleasing to God than you with your fitful pride.

But, above all, in this, as in everything else, should not our only question be, what is GOD's will? He has left all these imperfections in us, because He desires to destroy all our idols, and, first of all, that great object of our idolatry, self. There is nothing like a good, real imperfection to make us know what we are. And when we are thoroughly convinced that, so far from being on the road to sanctity, we may think ourselves too happy to escape hell, then we are in the best possible state to receive frequently the Holy Communion. GOD, in His infinite mercy, thinks that we do Him more honour by the blind and headlong confidence with which we, His guilty creatures, trust ourselves in such immediate union with Him, than we should do by our discontented and sullen reverence.

Above all, what was the design of JESUS in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament? Let us say it boldly, for we are authorized to do so by all that has gone before, the Holy Communion was meant not only for saints, but also for the imperfect. Let us not take the altitude of the Infinite by the standard of our own narrow hearts, but by the measures which He himself has given us. The more I study the sacraments, and especially the Holy Eucharist, the more I am astounded by the manifestation which they contain of GOD's indulgence

to sinners. They are a separate, a distinct revelation of His stupendous compassion for our miserable frailty. Not even the Passion could beforehand have told us how often GOD meant to pardon sin. The guilt of each separate mortal sin was so near infinity as to require expiation by Man-God. Not till we actually saw the unrestrained application of the sufferings of JESUS in the sacraments, could we be certain of how far He intended its virtue, infinite in itself, to extend. O blessed Physician of the human race! in dying Thou didst not forget Thine own words, that Thou didst not come to heal "those that are in health, but those that are ill."

Contemplate the sacraments, even the Blessed Sacrament, and see if, with all its divinity, it is not meant for flesh and blood, and not for angels—for sinful flesh and blood, not only for saints. Nor does it even confine its effects to those diseases of human nature which by their very greatness and their horror seem to acquire a dignity which renders them worthy of the efforts of a GOD to heal them. There are deep and dismal abysses of sin, into which we are not surprised to see GOD descend to snatch the soul from ruin, wild gusts of stormy passion, leaping, roaring waves of maddening guilt, which seethe and rage so fiercely around the drowning soul, that the blessed feet of JESUS alone can smooth them down. There are tempests which call for the voice of JESUS to say to them: Peace, be still. O LORD JESUS! there are times when we hear of sins which make us understand Thine agony, and which no tears can adequately weep but the red drops from Thy Sacred

Heart. It seems worthy of Thee to soothe the moaning of despair, to bring back hope to the reckless, and innocence to those so shameful that they have lost all shame. But who could suppose that He could be so compassionate to the very littleness of our strangely ignoble nature? Who could have thought beforehand that in His great Sacrament, where, if I may dare to say so, He taxes to the uttermost the power of His Godhead and Manhood together, He should have legislated for its frequent reception by the imperfect?

The fact that such was the design of Our LORD, of course, cuts off by the very roots the objections of our imaginary lady, and it is worth while to dwell on it. She evidently belongs to the very numerous class of ordinary Christians. I cannot help thinking that the ordinary ways of GOD's grace are considerably misunderstood, especially by converts. I wish to rehabilitate this very numerous middle class of Christians, who are not sinners, and will never be canonized saints. If we clearly understand that their communions may be frequent, and the grounds for that opinion, we shall also see what may be required of them, and that more may be got out of them for the glory of God than is thought.

For this purpose let us examine with greater precision the principles which we have laid down that habitual venial sins, *if struggled against*, need be no obstacle to the frequency of communion. Theologically it rests upon the opinion, that such habits of sin do not of themselves destroy any of the effects of the Holy Communion, though they may

lessen them in degree. If Our Blessed LORD has so constructed His Adorable Sacrament that its graces should flow into the souls even of the imperfect, clearly He intended it for them, and that they should receive Him as often as is possible. To state this, however, so broadly is not sufficient. There are many kinds of venial sin, and we must draw some distinctions which will make the matter clear.

First, venial sins may be actually committed at the moment itself of communion. God forbid that it should be so, still it is conceivable. Even in this case, the whole of the effect of communion is not destroyed. The augmentation of habitual grace would still be infused into the soul, for this fruit of the Blessed Sacrament follows uniformly, even when there is no actual devotion, nay, when there is sin committed at the time. The sole indispensable condition for this effect is the absence of conscious mortal sin. None, however, of the actual and peculiar graces of the Blessed Sacrament follow in the case contemplated. "The effect of this Sacrament," says St Thomas, "is not only the increase of habitual grace, but also a certain actual spiritual sweetness, and this is destroyed when a man communicates with distractions, which amount to venial sin."*

So much for actual sins; let us now consider habitual venial sins in their effect on the fruits of the Blessed Sacrament. I am not going to relapse into metaphysics, nevertheless we must try to under-

* Summa 3,¹ Quest. 79, art. 8.

stand a little psychology, that is, to study our own souls, in order to understand the subject.

Who is there amongst us who has not observed a strange phenomenon in our mysterious, complicated nature? Quite independent of our wills, from frequently doing an action, good or bad, there grows within us a facility in doing it, and a strong inclination to it, which amounts to a positive difficulty in avoiding it. In each act of sin, the offender only dreams of satiating the passion of the moment, but all the while stealthily there grows upon him a new quality, which imbeds itself in his being, and gradually becomes a part of himself. It is a fatal proneness to the sin which remains after the fit of passion is over. The will has nothing to do with it; though it can, of course, avoid the individual act, yet, if the act is committed, the habit comes on without the will. It is a physical thing, like a parasite disease, fixing its roots in our flesh, living in our life, and poisoning our blood. That it is independent of the will is evident, because the propensity remains when the will would fain get rid of it, yet feels, in spite of itself, the terrible drawing to sin. Nay, so little is the will interested in its continuance, that the propensity is not even a sin till it is consented to; its existence, even when it is a proneness to a mortal sin, is quite compatible with a state of grace. An habitual sinner is absolved and justified, though the habit, that is, the propension remains strong within him. He has no desire that it should continue; nay, he hates it, and he fights against it. Precisely the same is the case, of course,

with a habit of venial sin. It may be in us against our will. We may detest the vanity, or the anger, or the sloth, or indulgence of our ease, which is in us, and yet it remains in spite of us. We may even hate it, and yet yield to it, in individual acts, because the strength of it is not to be broken but by long efforts, and is independent of our will. In one word, affection to the habit is something quite different from the habit itself; nay, the fact of our committing acts of that venial sin does not prove that we love the habit.

Let us now apply this to the matter before us. If a habit of venial sin is no sin in itself, and if the guilt of the individual acts of it can be pardoned and done away by confession, or by contrition, or by taking holy water, or by hearing Mass, or in any of the many ways in which the Precious Blood can be applied to them, what possible irreverence is there in the frequent communion of a person in the state of mind such as we have described?

The principle here laid down is so important that, at the risk of being tedious, I will quote the words of an excellent, though little known, writer on the subject, Father Vaubert, of the Society of Jesus: * "The dispositions of persons who commit venial sins are exceedingly different. The characteristics of those who have an affection to venial sin are these: their aim is simply to be saved, and nothing more; under pretext that venial sins do not lead to damnation, they do not choose to deprive themselves of

* "La Dévotion à N. S. Jésus dans l'Euchariste," vol. 1, p. 183. [Ed. 1752.]

numberless little gratifications, dear to human nature, but still, to some extent, offensive to God. They will not put themselves out in the slightest degree to watch over their hearts, nor make an effort to avoid the occasions of them. They commit them knowingly, coolly, and without scruple. They blind themselves about their little faults, and make a false conscience to themselves, in order to be at peace, under the notion that it is impossible for them to live in any other way than they do, and that they are quite safe, notwithstanding their mode of life. In a word, they look upon these sins as trifles, and on those who avoid them as extravagant and scrupulous. As for those, on the contrary, whose venial sins proceed from frailty, though their sins be very numerous, it does not follow that they have not a sincere desire to make progress in virtue, but that they are still imperfect and human; their natural character is as yet unsubdued, and their feelings are uncontrolled. In a word, such is the strength of the habits which they contracted of detraction, for instance, in small matters, or else of indulging their inordinate love of ease, in numberless cases, that they still fall into frequent sins, although they have sincerely set to work to purify their souls and to avoid proximate occasions. Their consent to these sins is not entire: they only commit them with a half deliberation, and they grieve deeply for them, sometimes even at the moment of committing them. Now, it seems to me that there would be a manifest injustice in treating these two classes alike. It would show a want of

discernment if we were to apply to both equally the language of the Fathers with respect to venial sin, in connexion with the Blessed Sacrament. When St Ambrose says that we must communicate every day, because we sin every day, he evidently does not advise daily communion to those who habitually and unscrupulously commit deliberate venial sins. On the other hand, it is equally plain that St Bonaventure does not point to venial sins into which holy souls fall inadvertently, when he says that these sins make the soul cowardly, negligent, and unfit for Holy Communion, and even calls the communions of those who commit them 'unworthy.' If that were so, then those Fathers would not only contradict other Fathers, but themselves also. How else are you to reconcile St Augustine saying, that there are sins which should not prevent us from communicating, with St. Augustine when he tells us, that venial sins are like a foul skin-disease, which makes our Spouse loathe us? How else will you harmonize St Bonaventure with himself? He bids us in one place beware of approaching the altar with lukewarmness; in another he says, 'Go to the Holy Communion, in spite of lukewarmness; if only you humble yourself, humility will stand in the place of fervour.' It seems to me, then, impossible to say universally that venial sins are an obstacle to communion. It depends entirely on the nature of the sin, on the dispositions of the sinner, and the effects caused in him by the Holy Communion."

It is evident that the principle is here laid down,

that some venial sins are not an obstacle to frequent communion. The same maxim is asserted also in a little work on the subject, which deserves to be better known.* “ We must not confound together the different kinds of venial sin. They are more or less deliberate; some have their roots in a certain malignity of heart; others are committed on an instantaneous temptation. Some are fully deliberate; others proceed from negligence and frailty. Some are a cause of scandal to servants and relatives; others are known but to God. The knowledge of all these different states may help a confessor to allow or put off communion.” It is plain, then, that it would be untrue to say that all venial sin is incompatible with frequent communion, and unjust to class together sins which are so very different in degree of heinousness as these different kinds of venial sin.

Now that we are armed with these principles, let us revert to our imaginary lady. I would answer thus: You have nothing to say for yourself. Your director is perfectly right to urge upon you frequent communion. On the one hand, God has given you an *attrait* for it. He has given you certain mystical tendencies. Do not be frightened at the word; I only mean that He has bestowed upon you a love for prayer and a devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which I have pre-supposed all along. On the other hand, frequent communion requires nothing extraordinary, nor even an approach to sanctity, which is something differing more in kind than in degree

* “ Principes de direction pour la Communion Fréquente.”

from ordinary goodness. It only implies a genuine, hearty wish to be better, and a real struggle with yourself to get rid of your habits of sin.

Not only, however, is it proved negatively that habitual venial sins are no obstacle to frequent communion, because they do not impede its effects, but many of the effects of communion are positively intended for the destruction of venial sin. It would be sufficient for me to point to the declaration of the Council of Trent that the Blessed Sacrament destroys our daily sins as well as being an antidote to mortal sin. I appeal also to the Catechism of the Council, which tells us that it is undoubted that venial sins are remitted and pardoned by the Holy Eucharist, and this testimony is the more valuable because the Catechism implies that this is clearly the intention of the Sacrament, since it compares its actions to that of food refreshing the daily wants of the tissues of the body. May I not also appeal to experience? I will not insist even upon the opinion, which many hold, that the Holy Communion directly remits venial sin, like the Sacrament of Penance. I will only dwell on what is certain, and that is, that the Blessed Sacrament engenders in us, if not always sensible, at least actual charity, which burns up our inclination to venial sin. What is it that we all want but love? Why are we so lukewarm, so careless of offending our good God, except that we have so little in us of unselfish, disinterested love? The habit of charity is not enough; it must produce burning acts of love. The fountains of our heart must be broken up, and

out of their depths must spring up the latent flame. It is even of importance to us to feel the love of JESUS within us. It is a great help when it is sensible to us as human love in its excess. This is precisely what the Blessed Sacrament often does. At the touch of JESUS the heart melts. The cold stone is broken, and there gush out of our heart spontaneous acts of love far beyond its natural powers. They are not elicited out of our previous dispositions, which are mere passive conditions and not causes. Our souls are like a harp, over the strings of which the fingers of JESUS sweep, so that they discourse most eloquent music, heavenly music which is not their own. It is this love which acts physically upon habits of venial sin and destroys them.

Nor must I forget to notice that effect of the Holy Communion which is called in theology the diminution of the *fomes peccati*, of that which forms "the fuel of sin" within us. What is the meaning of this? Every one knows that resistance to venial sin is less in our power than the escape from mortal sin. It is very possible, nay easy, for good Christians in ordinary cases to avoid all mortal sin. We know, on the contrary, that though we can prevent each individual act of venial sin, in the long run we are sure to succumb at last to some of the many temptations which beset us. The reason of this lies in our strange nature, half spirit and half flesh. We are psychical men, that is, though our immortal part is spirit, yet it is a soul animating a body, and it has gained animal propensities in the process. A super-

natural state was necessary to keep this nature in order, but that was destroyed in the fall, and we have become what we are now, peevish, nervous, irritable, hysterical, passionate beings, and yet withal so lazy, so fond of ease, that we need a perpetual stimulus to make us persevere in anything. It is this animal tendency in us which is the chief source of venial sin, directly, because it affords matter for sin; indirectly, because it unnerves and unmans us; it wastes our powers, and makes us impotent to bear the pain of being continually on the watch. Now, even on this animal nature the Holy Communion does a wonderful work. Blessed anodyne, how many characters it has changed! how many uncontrollable feelings it has laid to sleep! Black thoughts fly away before its potent charm, like phantoms of the night before the dawn. Dislikes and antipathies which seemed and were too strong for us to overcome, are lulled to rest, and fancied injuries, which seemed unpardonable, now only provoke a smile. There are petty griefs of which we are ashamed, and yet which may wear our lives out by their constant gnawing. The Blessed Sacrament assuages and soothes them. There are failings of which we are perfectly conscious, on which conscientiousness and a stern sense of duty have alike tried their hands and failed; they melt away before frequent communion. O blessed anodyne! harsh souls become tender, and weak souls brave under thy gentle influence. Restless hearts, come hither, and He will make you calm, for all these wonderful effects of the

Holy Communion may be summed up in one word—peace. After the tremulous joy of the act of communion there comes a holy calm and a sweet repose. It comes from the presence of CHRIST; it comes from proximity to GOD. We have within us the Godhead of JESUS. Our little hearts bear within them that Infinite sphere, which has neither shape, colour, nor line of boundary. The creature lies still in the arms of the Creator. No wonder the result is a passionless calm. Even when, as will often happen from various causes, the sensible effects of the Blessed Sacrament are impeded at the moment of communion, yet the soul, which keeps up during the day that peculiar watchfulness over self, which St Philip recommends so strongly to those who have communicated in the morning, will hardly fail to experience that blessed peace which is the normal effect of the visit of Our LORD.

Furthermore, let us not forget that much of this comes *ex opere operato*. This is not an unpractical truth, nor an empty word. No truth is barren, and no theological terms are empty. They mean, as we all know, that these effects are caused by the sacrament itself, and not by our dispositions, which are mere conditions. If this be true, what wonder if the effects are out of all proportion to the dispositions? If so, why are we scandalized when persons, in one sense, utterly unworthy of so great a favour, go frequently to communion? They go there to have effects wrought upon their souls which are supernatural, and utterly beyond their own powers and the forces of all possible nature. In this sense it is

perfectly true to say that the sacraments act like charms. Let us beware lest, in exaggerating the dispositions necessary for them, we deprive them of their divinity. They are meant to make the sinful good and the weak strong; what wonder if the weak and sinful approach them? They were meant for the paralysed, the fever-smitten, and the plague-stricken nature of man. As Extreme Unction was meant for the dying, and Absolution for dead souls, so the Blessed Sacrament is meant for the weak and imperfect. As well expel all mortal sin from your confessional as deprive those who have still habitual venial sins about them from Holy Communion.

Furthermore, we must remember that all these are arguments for frequent communion as well as for Holy Communion in general. It is argued that imperfect souls were intended to receive the Holy Communion, because of the beneficial effect which it has in enabling them to get rid of their venial sin. But if two communions are more beneficial than one and give the soul greater power over habits of sin, why not communicate twice rather than once? If there is no irreverence to any one such communion, why should there be in two or three? If a number of communions make a soul love God more, what possible reason is there why that soul should not receive the Blessed Sacrament oftener? But is there to be no limit? Yes, there is a limit, as we shall see presently; but I know of none as long as the Holy Communion continues to do good to the soul, or else when the good which it does is not counter-balanced by accidental evils. *Salus populi suprema*

lex, is ever to be remembered when we are dealing with sacraments.

I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that what we all of us want most of all is confidence in the mighty indulgence of GOD. It is safer to preach unmitigated confidence in England than elsewhere, for religious presumption is by no means an English fault. Nowhere has a desperate gloomy Calvinism flourished as it has in the British Isles. Wherever religion takes thoroughly hold of an English mind, out of the Catholic Church, ten to one it will take some austere and gloomy form. Even Puseyism began with a stern Novatianism. The British GOD has always a tendency to be a tyrant. Heaven defend us from such a GOD as this, a second edition of Sivah, the destroyer. Even good Christians amongst us have sometimes a certain melancholy about their religion. Even our familiar name for GOD is the Almighty, when a Frenchman would say "*le bon Dieu*," or a German, "*der lieber Gott*." I suspect we English priests hear more about despair than others. Genuine, real despair is perhaps rare; what is commonly meant is discontent, or bad temper with GOD; yet, even this indicates the general gloomy aspect of our religion. For this reason, let us preach frequent communion. It seems to me as if to us in England the Blessed Sacrament was even more than it is elsewhere. All our ancient shrines have been long ago destroyed, and the relics of our saints scattered to the winds. How different is the aspect of a Catholic country! We have only to cross the Channel to feel in a Christian atmosphere. Every walk may be a pilgrimage;

there are wayside chaplets and crucifixes, and the place is poor indeed which has not a shrine of our Lady within a reasonable distance. But where is an Englishman to take refuge from the hurry of this restless vortex of a world? Where to be rescued from himself? Where but at the feet of JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament? Even if we were to cease to insist on frequent communion, yet weekly communion might be far more general. To England, more than elsewhere, it seems to me, do the words of Suarez apply: "Ordinarily speaking, so multitudinous is the business of human life, so many the distractions which absorb the mind and take up time, that men cannot more than once a week receive the Holy Communion with due dispositions, or give as much time as is fitting for it. Nevertheless ordinarily speaking, there is no difficulty in being fit to communicate once a week." Again, let us remember the words of another theologian: "There are few to whom weekly communion is to be forbidden." Communion once a week was, as we have seen, the normal state of things for Christians during the greater part of the existence of Christianity. Why should it not be so again? Are then, it will be said, in this working-day world of England, merchants, lawyers, tradesmen, labourers, to communicate once a week? I answer, why not, if they choose to prepare for it? There are exceedingly few who could not prepare if they chose. Many a poor girl in London, whether dressmaker in Regent Street, or costermonger in Covent Garden, has been kept from ruin by weekly communion.

Nothing can be more important than that all who

have anything to do with the education of children should inspire them with loving ideas of the Blessed Sacrament. There are many who, by their teaching, have rendered Holy Communion a perfect bugbear to children. For Heaven's sake, let no one have a terror of the Holy Communion! There have been souls to whom the day of Communion was a very torment, in consequence of the injudicious teaching of most worthy persons. Above all things, let us inspire those dear little souls with love for the Blessed Sacrament. Teach them the doctrine. Let them get it well into their heads that that is God, and reverential fear will not be wanting to their simple souls. Above all, do not frighten them by anxious siftings into things generally to be ignored. In one word, teach them love, and all else will follow.

Let us now sum up what has been said in this chapter: we shall see that we have made considerable progress in ascertaining, not only negatively, what does not prevent the frequent reception of the Holy Communion, but also positively, the style of soul (if I may use the expression) which ought to communicate frequently.

First, evidently, considerable imperfections are no obstacle. There is a subtle Pelagianism in all the arguments used against the frequent communion of the imperfect. There are many persons, in whose theology the doctrine that we can do nothing without Divine grace, does not practically exist. They are obliged to believe that there is such a thing as grace; but they act and feel as if all improvement

depended upon self. The fact is, that we must make all possible efforts to improve; yet feel all the while that they are rather conditions than causes of success. The Blessed Sacrament will do more than many efforts. Considerable imperfections, therefore, are no reason why the soul should be deprived of frequent communion.

Secondly,* though it is not necessary to have vanquished our imperfections, it is necessary to have the hearty will to get rid of them, and to set no bounds to our longing to love God. The one essential thing is, that there should be a positive, definite struggle against our defects. The frequent communicant should be *vir desideriorum*, a man of desires. He must have a desire for Holy Communion, based on a desire to vanquish sin. Lastly, he should have a desire for union with God and a consequent *attrait* for communion with him in prayer.

* The dispositions mentioned in this paragraph are more exacting than those stated to be necessary in the Decree. They are rather the fruit, which frequent Communion may be expected to produce. See Decree *Sacra Tridantina*, No. 3.—ED.

CHAPTER IV.* THE LIMIT TO HOLY COMMUNION

ACCORDING to the principles laid down in the last chapter, it may seem that I am far under the mark in expressing a desire that the majority of Christians should communicate once a week. As most probably by far the greater number of Catholics who practise their religion are ordinarily in a state of grace, and as the only condition for receiving some benefit from the Holy Communion is freedom from mortal sin, it would seem that the generality of practising Christians might communicate every day. If this were a legitimate inference, it would be fatal to what has been said. The sense of Christians and the common usage of priests would be plainly against such a conclusion; and in respect to the administration of the Sacraments, common feeling and common usage are all but infallible. All Christians feel that, in order to communicate twice a week, a soul should be, ordinarily speaking, better than one who is allowed to receive the Blessed Sacrament only once; in short, that something more is required for daily communion than the mere absence of mortal sin. The question, therefore, is already decided; yet it will be very useful to discuss it; because in the discussion we shall learn, what it is of great consequence to know, the limit to the frequency of communion. It will be found that, speculatively speaking two simple standards may be assigned, by which a priest may measure the number of communions to

* This chapter should be read in the light of the remarks made on p. xiii.

be granted to an individual soul. It may either be said that he may allow a soul to communicate frequently, up to the point where the communions would involve an irreverence to Our LORD, or else, it may be laid down, that there is no limit whatsoever, as long as the Blessed Sacrament continues to do good to the soul. I believe, however, that the two things, reverence towards God and the good to the soul, will be found to be identical, though practically a priest will find it more convenient to have an eye solely to the benefit of the penitent.

First, then, there are many authorities, by no means to be despised, in favour of the opinion, that every Christian in a state of grace may, nay, ought to communicate every day. I cannot help thinking that Arnauld's book was partly provoked by real laxity in the administration of the Holy Eucharist on the part of some of his opponents.* Certainly, it is curious that the very year in which "La Fréquente Communion" appeared, a French edition was published, at Lyons, of a book written a few years before by Sanchez, a Spanish theologian,†

* That there was some laxity in the casuists of the day is evident from the fact, that two of the answers made to the Provinciales were condemned by the Church; the "Apologie des Casuistes," by the Jesuit Father Pirot, and the book published by the Jesuit Father Moya, under the name of "Amadeus Guimeneus." The condemnations published by Alexander VII and VIII, and Innocent IX, prove the same thing.

† This is not the Jesuit Sanchez, who has written the admirable treatise, "De Matrimonio." All the great Jesuit theologians are against the opinion here combated. The prevalence of lax opinions might account for a curious story, mentioned by St Beuve, that De Lugo was opposed to the condemnation of Arnauld's book.

advocating the opinion that all Christians free from mortal sin ought to be advised to communicate daily. He claims a number of theologians in support of his view; and it is remarkable that two Spanish Benedictines are quoted by De Lugo as having held that every Christian in a state of grace had a positive right to daily communion, and could claim it in spite of the prohibition of his confessor. The same abuse continued in some places much later in the seventeenth century. In February, 1679, the Congregation of the Council published a decree, sanctioned by Innocent XI, against the practice of universal daily communion, which had grown up in certain dioceses, under the notion that it was of divine right. Nay, the Blessed Sacrament was even carried to the houses of those who were in health, and received by them in their beds. In the same year the same Pope condemned the proposition, that frequent confession and communion were a mark of predestination, even in those who lived like heathens.* As late, again, as the middle of the eighteenth century, a certain Père Pichon, a French Jesuit, wrote a book to prove that the only qualification for daily communion is freedom from mortal sin, and dedicated it to the pious Queen of Poland and Duchess of Lorraine. The author, after being overwhelmed by episcopal censures, was put upon the Index, and recanted his errors in a second edition.

It would be of little use to evoke from their

* This proposition was maintained by the Friars Minors in Belgium, "Jæger Historia Ecclesiastica," vol. II, 332.

graves errors which have been forgotten, if it were not that the memory of their condemnation will serve to prevent their ever being resuscitated. The fact of their re-appearance at intervals, during a period of a century, in such various places, and in the teaching of members of such respectable orders, is a proof that they have something to say for themselves; as they rose once, so they might rise again. It may, however, be considered now as a point settled by the Church, that it is unlawful to teach that every Christian in a state of grace may communicate every day. Something more is wanting besides the absence of mortal sin. There is some limit to frequent communion. A priest would do wrong if he indiscriminately allowed unlimited communions to his penitents; and it is possible for penitents to communicate too often. Ordinarily speaking, though not always, as we shall see, the number of communions should depend upon the goodness of the communicant. All these conclusions, which, in fact, are but one, flow from the condemnation of the opinions which I have noticed.

But, furthermore, let us examine into the basis of the opinion, and we shall then be able to see where the mistake lies. Surely, it may be said, as often as the soul is benefited and receives grace from the Holy Communion, it may be inferred that Our LORD intends us to receive Him. Now, it is commonly admitted, that the sole condition for the reception of grace from the Blessed Sacrament is the being in a state of grace. Not even is actual devotion necessary for this. A soul voluntarily distracted at the moment

of communion, still receives an augmentation of grace. Our LORD infuses grace into the soul of a Christian who commits a venial sin at the very instant of receiving Him. If all this is allowed generally, if it is also undoubted that Our LORD loves the confidence which approaches Him, rather than the fear which separates us from Him, why, then, should not all Christians in a state of grace communicate every day, since every day they receive an augmentation of divine grace, whatever their dispositions may be, however little they may have prepared themselves? Surely, the infinite love of JESUS would have us unite ourselves to Him as often as it benefits our souls.

Such is the case for the opinion condemned. Let us, however, recollect what has been said about the effects which flow from the reception of the Holy Communion. It is perfectly true that every communion received by a person free from mortal sin, produces an increase of sanctifying grace; but actual deliberate, venial sin, committed at the moment, or else an indevout communion, hinders the sacramental graces which are peculiar to the Holy Eucharist. The reason why St Thomas pronounces that a Christian in the habit of committing venial sins may still communicate is because, by a devout preparation for the Blessed Sacrament, he repents sincerely of them, and therefore receives all the actual graces of the Holy Communion. If, however, there is a wilful waste of grace, the case is totally changed. In the same way it was argued that there was no irreverence in the frequent communion

of the imperfect, because a habit of venial sin, without attachment to it, does not prevent the reception of any of the kinds of graces attached to the Blessed Sacrament, though it may interfere with the degree and the quantity of them. Far different is the case we are considering. It presupposes that the sole qualification for daily communion is the absence of mortal sin; consequently that even when communions are indevout, when habits of venial sin have fearful possession of the soul, because the soul consciously loves them, even then the Christian ought to communicate daily. To every word of this sentence, premise and conclusion, theology gives a most emphatic *negō*. When communions are indevout, no penitent ought to be allowed to communicate frequently. The actual graces peculiar to the sacrament are wasted. There are no burning acts of the love of GOD, elicited by the presence of JESUS, when a soul is so badly disposed. No supernatural sweetness is infused by GOD. The whole ground of the opinion which we are reviewing is cut away by the assertion of theologians that something more is wanted for a good communion than the bare freedom from mortal sin. The state of grace is enough to prevent sacrilege, but not enough to authorize unlimited communions.

But, it will be said, a person who communicates daily will not make indevout communions. Now, first of all, this is changing the whole hypothesis. It is allowing what I am contending for, viz., that devotion is necessary for frequent communion. Secondly, I cannot think that daily communion, by

any physical or fatal necessity, ensures devotion. This is not GOD's way. Devotion does not drop from the clouds, nor does grace make its way into a soul which wilfully puts an obstacle to it. Let us never forget that we must do something on our part to obtain these dispositions, and moreover, that they are necessary. It requires a little thought to master the idea that the dispositions are mere conditions of grace, and yet necessarily influence its effects on the soul. The action of grace, *ex opere operato*, has been sometimes compared to that of fire burning wood; the dryness of the wood is in no way the cause of the application of the fire, yet it is a condition of its catching. I would rather compare the infusion of grace by the sacraments to the operation of GOD in the creation of a new soul. GOD has in the natural order no more august and solemn act than that. It is a direct exertion of His creative power as truly as when He first said, Let there be light, and simultaneously with the first dawn of light, myriads of angels were born. The new soul is created out of nothing. There is no pre-existent substance out of which the soul is made. It is a new independent spirit formed by GOD alone, and all the paternal love rises up in the bosom of the Holy Trinity as when they said: Let us make man in our own image. Yet this most august act on the part of GOD is necessarily chained to material dispositions. What is more, though these laws are conditions and not causes, yet they greatly influence the state of the immortal spirit then created. If the brain which it

informs is defective, it never rises to consciousness of itself; the child is an idiot, and its powers lie dormant without ever breaking out into act. It is impossible to say how much prompt, quick, keen-visioned genius depends upon the temperament of the body. Here, then, is a great act of God, infallibly following upon material laws, and dependent upon them as its condition, though not its cause, while, on the other hand, God's gift is greatly influenced by them. So it is also with the *opus operatum* of the sacraments. Grace flows, but it may find itself obstructed by the bad dispositions of the soul. It may lie inactive when it is received. It may run like water off the cold, unreceptive rock, which may be worn and wasted by it, but cannot assimilate it; and such is the case with God's actual inspirations. No corresponding movement rises in the soul to the embrace of God. The ice in its bosom may even extinguish the fire of God's love. Surely, if the dispositions of the communicant have so great an influence over the grace received, that communion may, in a very true sense, be called unworthy when the dispositions are such as to destroy the peculiar effects of the Blessed Sacrament.

Furthermore, so little is it true that the soul is benefited by a communion under the circumstances described, that even the very grace which the soul does receive is neutralized and rendered inactive. Let us recollect what has been already said about the necessity for actual grace to enable us to make any use whatever of habitual grace. God has

not, in justifying us, put into our souls a fund of habitual grace, upon which we are to draw as we please without any further aid from Him. It has been already shown that habitual grace, though it remains permanently in the soul, requires the constant aid of actual graces to excite it to action, and that without the continual influx of these graces from heaven it lies inactive within us. It is impossible to exaggerate our constant need of God. We require to live and move in a supernatural atmosphere of heavenly influences rained down upon us at every moment, or else we die. We can never be weaned from God; the older we grow the greater seems our dependence. Nay, a saint is only a being who has become so one with God that he clings more constantly to His maternal bosom. He, therefore, can hardly be said to be benefited by the Holy Communion who, though he receives an increase of habitual grace, yet cuts himself off by his indevoutness from the other graces which alone make it active, and which are necessary to his spiritual existence.

Let us ponder well the words of a great theologian on the subject of indevout communions: "They who frequently communicate without actual love and without devotion, although they receive an augmentation of grace, often do not show more fervour in their conduct; both because infused habits do not mortify the passions, nor take away the feebleness left in the soul after the habits of vice, as acquired habits do, and also because habits of grace and charity do their work immediately

through actual graces which are not given to indevout communicants. For this reason it is that they appear so lukewarm and languid in their spiritual exercises. And because tepidity and the want of actual aids from God negatively dispose the soul to a grievous fall, therefore, carelessness in this respect is very dangerous, for it disposes to grave falls, and often brings down the curse of God.”*

The waste of grace, then, is quite a sufficient reason why such communions as are described should be dangerous. We cannot afford to lose an atom of grace, for we cannot say that any one grace is superfluous. There are, however, other positive evils resulting from them besides the loss of grace. No greater evil can possibly happen to a soul than the loss of reverence for God. One of the principal effects of the Holy Communion is precisely that blessed, chaste fear of God, which thrills through our very flesh, and tends to make mortal sin impossible. Now, nothing destroys this feeling like a series of free and easy communions. Let no one think them a light evil. It is not too much to say that our salvation depends upon the preservation in our soul of the thought of God in its entirety. The idea of God, which comes like a vision from heaven upon the soul, is but too easily blurred and defaced. It should be cherished as a precious gift from God Himself. It cannot come from earth, or sea, or heaven; the voice of the sea is not mighty enough to teach us what is God; nor is the whole universe wide

* Viva, Dam. Prop. 23, Alexander VIII.

enough to give us a notion of the Infinite God. It must come from the Word, illuminating every man that cometh into the world. It may be a reminiscence of the first moment of its existence, the feeling still fresh of God's first embrace when the breath of life came upon it, the echoes of the first whisper of the Spirit of God to our spirit. Or, rather is it not the continued feeling of the pressure of the presence of God upon it at every moment of its existence in this world here below? But whencesoever it comes, we have a fearful power over it. Like God it is one, because it is an impression from God Himself, as from a seal, stamping His own image on our souls. No part can be taken from it without its destruction. Each attribute is God, and you cannot eliminate one without vitiating the whole idea of Him. Just so fatal in its degree is any vitiation of our feeling towards God. There is no sense so delicate or so easily impaired as our sense of God. Our conception of Him is made up of a number of elements, not so much blended together in just proportions as each possessing the soul without prejudice to the rest. It is at once all chaste fear and all entrancing love; love and fear, each penetrating the other, not confined to separate spheres within us, but diffused throughout our powers, and rising up to God in one great feeling of adoration.

Woe, then, to the soul whose reverence to God is disturbed. The image of God upon it is not only writ in water, but its outlines are confused and run widely together. Its whole attitude towards

GOD is wrong and the angels in Heaven would weep, if they could, to see it approach Him with such disrespect. You might as well take away an attribute from your thought of GOD, as a feeling from your conduct towards Him. Now, if there be one thing more than another likely to breed irreverence towards Him, it is careless communion. There is a familiarity with GOD which is not irreverence, and I am not talking about that. I mean preparations and thanksgivings, either careless or non-existent, without a wish or an effort to avoid sin or to lead a better life.

Besides, we are such poor, miserable creatures, that there is a limit to our devotion. Each communion is or ought to be a distinct effort, and it does not follow that because that effort can be made with ease and delight once, it would be elicited twice without a fatal weariness. I believe it will be found that the average devotion of mankind cannot stand more communions than one in a week, with the addition of particular festivals. "*Sitientes, sitientes, venite ad aquas,*" St Philip used to say, and in order to keep up this vehement desire of Holy Communion, he would at times refuse his penitents leave to approach the altar as often as they wished.

Moreover, the Church herself has consecrated the principle, that it would ever be better to sacrifice some increase of grace rather than incur the tremendous risk of inducing in the soul any irreverence towards OUR LORD. For this reason it is not allowed to administer the Holy Communion to the dying, when their illness is such as to endanger

the rejection of the Sacred Host. Again, it is forbidden to receive the Blessed Sacrament more than once a day, though in ancient times, instances are to be found of holy priests celebrating several times a day, out of simple devotion. Nor must we forget that most remarkable instance of the same principle,* where the Church calls upon her children to sacrifice some additional grace to be derived from the chalice, for fear of irreverence to the Precious Blood.

I cannot conceive that, unless Our Blessed LORD had known that no amount of accidental good could possibly counterbalance the tremendous evil to our souls of anything which would breed a habit of irreverence towards Him, He would have allowed the faithful to be deprived of any additional grace, however unessential. Considering His Passion, we know Him too well to suppose that it could be from any dread of ignominy to Himself that He thus inspired His Church. It would have fulfilled all the essentials of redemption, if the Precious Blood had been shed on the day of His Passion with sacrificed solemnity. Angels might have received it in golden chalices. It would have been tolerable even if it had been shed on innocent, inanimate things of GOD's own making. We can bear to think

* Concilium non voluit negare aliquam novam gratiam conferri per calicem. Admoneo ex hac doctrina non fieri, ullomodo posse aliquos merito conqueri de Ecclesia quod usum Calicis laicis interdixerit, tum quia fructus substantialis et præcipuus in singulis speciebus habetur—tum etiam quia hujus in sacramenti dispensatione attendendum non solum ad suscipientium utilitatem sed etiam ad ipsius sacramenti reverentiam. De Lugo, Disp. xii, 3.

of it on the green grass or the olive roots of the garden of Gethsemane. O blessed Cross! we do not grudge it thee, nor even to the points of the crown of thorns; but imagination sickens when we remember how it lay on the stones and the dust of the wicked city, to be trampled under foot by that dreadful crowd; how it streamed on the hands and clothes of the men who nailed Him to the Cross. Surely, after that, it cannot be simply the dread of irreverence to Himself which makes Him dread the spilling of His Blood from the chalice. Most willingly He would shed it over again, with all the same circumstances of ignominy, if it could possibly add to the chance of our salvation. But He knew well that disrespect to Him would be an irreparable evil for us, and, for this reason, He would have us sacrifice the non-essential additional grace of the chalice, lest even accidental irreverence should produce in us a formal habit of disrespect towards Him.

It is plain, then, that frequent communions in those who are unfit for them bring positive evils with them. Something more is wanting than the mere state of grace, to authorize a priest to grant them to his penitents; and, if a man has neither desire nor devotion enough to prepare for two communions a week, he had better content himself with one than run the risk of growing careless and irreverent towards the Blessed Sacrament.

Furthermore, at the risk of a bathos, I cannot help speaking of another positive evil resulting from over-frequent communions. It is a disease which

infects some of the devout, and which, for want of a better name, I will call vainglory. Alas! poor human nature, can it be that from the Body and Blood of JESUS you suck such poison—such desperate littleness from His Divine Heart? Let us, however, deal gently with them, for are they not dear to GOD; in a state of grace, we hope, and on their way to Heaven, though after a long purgatory? Let us quietly analyse together the disease which I have called vainglory. I must say it has a basis which is excusable. It is natural to wish to know that we love GOD. We are glad to feel that our director thinks so, and we look upon the number of communions which he allows us as an index of his opinion to that effect. Yet this, too, is one of the unveracities of the spiritual life. First of all, it might by no means be good for us to know how much, nay, how little we love GOD. Let us look bravely out of ourselves upon GOD, for there, after all, are our hopes of salvation. We have been absolved, we are very sorry for our great sins; we commit the worst of them no more; we have every reason to hope that we are in GOD's grace. For the rest, we must trust in GOD. We lie in our little boat, floating on the bosom of GOD's great ocean of mercy, infinite depths below and infinite above; for such is our condition here. GOD loves all His creatures, and longs to save them all. He has proved it upon the Cross. Nay, we have every reason to think that He intends to save us. Has He not brought us to His Holy Church, either from our infancy, or by converting us from heresy? We love the faith, we

love the Blessed Sacrament. We love His Blessed Mother, though too little, yet sincerely. All these are marks of Predestination. For the rest, fling yourself upon God's infinite love. Alas! our little Pharisaical mint and cummin will avail but little at the day of judgement, if that does not help us. Secondly, let us be sure that all this anxiety to know how we stand with God has very much of self in it. Each of us has before him an ideal of himself, up to which he tries to act, and which he would fain think real. Many a man worships this pure abstract Ego, and, in Stoic fashion, would make all his life logically consistent with it, feels remorse whenever he falls short of it, and is sternly glad whenever he attains it. They do not suspect how little there is of God and His Holy Spirit in all this. It is like the spectre of the Brocken, of which we have read of old. A man sees before him a gigantic figure, which he takes for a being of the invisible world, little dreaming that it is only an enlarged vision of self, swollen as it is by the cunning witchery of light. Now, the first step in real devotion, and in the supernatural life, is the destruction of this spiritual idol, before which we are grimacing and arranging our attitudes. Then first we learn to give up our own views, and to fix our eyes on God. So true is this, that even at times a positive sin has turned out to be useful, if only it has dashed to earth this idol of self, so that God's Holy Spirit may build upon its ruins. Whatever flatters this self-consciousness, whatever turns the inward eye upon self, and makes us fancy ourselves good, is

an unmixed evil, if it were frequent communion itself. Oh! that we had quiet, unconscious devotion, a thing, we may add, possessed by few converts. Let us take this to heart, for, certainly, a desire for an increase of communions, based upon this, does not come from God.

Again, it must be said, this wishing to know what opinion our director has of us is a delusion and a snare. He, too, is not God, nor will he lead us to God if we care in the slightest degree what he thinks of us. If once you catch yourself speculating on what may be his view of you, put the thought down, for it is the beginning of all unverity. A certain regard for one who leads you to God no one can blame, but when it comes to anxiety to be well thought of by him, that is quite another thing. Then good-bye to all reality. Hence heart-burnings and jealousies. Hence thoughts that others communicate oftener than you, and consequent taking of scandal at their defects. Hence ten thousand littlenesses.

Now, let us pause and see where we are in our argument. We have found many positive evils resulting from over-frequent communion, each of them quite sufficient to counterbalance the good which accrues to the soul from the increase of sanctifying grace. It is plain, then, on the one hand, that the state of grace is not a sufficient qualification for unlimited communions; and on the other, what is still more to our purpose, we have discovered that the obstacles to communion are all such dispositions of the soul as make the Blessed Sacrament accident-

ally hurtful to it. In other words, a priest may allow his penitent to communicate just as often as he finds that it is good for him.

This, then, is what we have to keep steadily in view, the good of the individual soul. A rule, you will say, very vague and uncertain; yet, I think, in practice you will find it not so.

Let us apply it by way of example to a familiar case. A person comes to confession weekly; he never or very seldom has mortal sins to confess, but is perpetually falling into venial sins. Is he to be allowed to communicate weekly? There cannot be the slightest doubt as to the view of theologians on this point. For instance, Scaramelli says: "A director can and ought to allow weekly communion to all souls who have sufficient dispositions for absolution. Such is the common view of confessors, and such seems to be the present practice of the Church." Suarez says: "Weekly communion is not to be omitted on account of venial sins alone, because it is already a great effect of the Sacrament, to avoid mortal sins." St Alphonso's words are still stronger: "As for those persons who are not in danger of committing mortal sins, but who commit ordinarily deliberate venial sins, without the appearance of any amendment or desire of amendment, it will be best not to allow them communion more than once a week."* From these authorities it

* If St Alphonso's words were to be taken without drawback, they would be contrary to Viva's view, that a deliberate affection to venial sins is fatal to the most useful effects of Communion. We must, however, not forget that they are to be taken in connection with the common opinion of ascetical writers, that deliberate

is evident that our imaginary person, notwithstanding his venial sins, ought to be allowed weekly communion. On what principle are we to ground a practice so universal in its application? Clearly no other reason can be found except that the Holy Communion is proved by experience to be of use to the soul. The good of the recipient is to be consulted notwithstanding the waste of a great deal of grace. An inestimable effect is secured, the prevention of countless mortal sins, and Our LORD waives the consideration of the accidental disrespect done by the spilling of so much grace, in order to secure this enormous benefit for the soul of the communicant.

On the other hand, the writers quoted are peremptory in forbidding such souls to communicate oftener, because a weekly communion is sufficient for their good, while the waste of grace would not be counterbalanced by any benefit accruing to the recipient. Thus, in either case, the measure both in the giving and the withholding of Holy Communion is the amount of good done to the soul, as proved by experience.

Many advantages are gained by the establishment of this rule.

venial sins are, in the long run, sure to lead to mortal sins. The case, therefore, so strongly stated is hardly practicable. A person who came to confession every week would be very unlikely to commit venial sins with full deliberation. If they continually do so, then we must remember the opinion of St Alphonso, following those words quoted above, that it is useful at times to deprive them of Communion for a week. Thus much, however, follows from the saint's words, that he does not agree with St Francis of Sales, who says that an absence of all affection for venial sin is a condition for weekly Communion.

First, it enables us to eliminate all scrupulous fears about irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament. As long as real good is done to the soul, there is no irreverence. Thus, if it be found by experience, as I think it is, that the generality of practising Christians can be kept out of mortal sin by a weekly communion, then let them communicate weekly, the priest in the meanwhile stimulating them to do something for God, content, however, as God is, to get what little he can. If he can get more, then let them communicate oftener. Nor let him even be anxious if he cannot possibly cure them of some habit of venial sin. Let them struggle earnestly and sincerely, that is enough. Let the soul be militant and real, even though at times, poor soul, it be defeated. Then in proportion as habits of mental prayer are formed and dawns of union with God and mystical life appear, then let communions be gradually increased. As for daily communion, let it be very, very rare indeed. *Paucissimi*, says Vasquez, very few are fit for it. It may be that there are now too many daily communicants.

Another advantage of this rule is, that it is not a wooden one. It admits of a flexible application according to the wants of the individual. In such a subject-matter a more definite rule is impossible. The Church has always refused to lay down a positive rule, but has left the frequency of communion to the judgement of the confessor. When, for instance, on account of grave and most real abuses, certain bishops were anxious to forbid

communion except on particular days, Innocent XI in a decree which is the latest legislation of the Church on the subject, forbids so stiff a rule, and leaves the decision of each particular case to the confessor: "The frequency of communion is to be left to the judgement of confessors, who are bound to prescribe to laymen whatever they consider to be profitable for their salvation, according to the purity of their conscience, the fruit derived from the reception, and their progress in piety." We must, therefore, look to the *individual* soul. Souls cannot be ticketed and labelled, organized and administered. No man can say, this class of soul shall do this or that according to a wooden rule. Each soul is to be studied by itself, to be watched and prayed over, not to be talked much to, except with a few kind, gentle, encouraging words, in order to direct it, in plain terms, what it is to do, then to wait quietly for something more that God wants. There is to be no alteration of oracular precipitation, and, on the other hand, of obstinate stiffness and woodenness. God's Holy Spirit is its director, and He administers it, not you, except as His most humble servant. Have no preconceived notions. For instance, do not say to this soul: Thou shalt have a vocation, and thou shalt go into this order because I like it; but say to yourself honestly: This soul shall do whatever God's Holy Spirit wills, and she shall go anywhere, to the other end of the earth, if so be, to be active, to be contemplative, just as God wills. In this matter, also, of the number of its communions as in everything else, think what He

wants with the soul, and how the soul corresponds to it; study with what desires of Holy Communion He inspires it, and act accordingly; only be sure the desire comes from Him.

But how are we to know when it comes from Him? There is such a thing as discernment of spirits, much neglected, indeed, now-a-days, nevertheless very real, nay, very accessible to every priest, and to be prayed for. There are marks enough by which we may know a sincere soul when we see one. When it has no illusions, when it goes straight to God and forgets self, when it struggles with its sins and is sorry for them, when it loves prayer, and in proportion as it does so, let it communicate frequently, and you are safe.

CHAPTER V. THE COMMUNION OF SINNERS

A THING exists which is the destruction of optimism, and which, I confess, inclines me naturally to take gloomy views of the world and of its prospects, and that is sin. They can afford to take a cheerful view of things in general whose knowledge of sin is confined to the fact that men and women are sometimes hanged, and transported, and imprisoned; but as for those who, in any capacity, come face to face with sin, and do their best to grapple with it, and who, therefore, know its awful strength, for those who have to descend into the foul depths of a rotten society and to work amongst its horrors, it is very hard to speak otherwise than sadly of a world where it exists. O beautiful world of God! it is easy to be happy in the merry springtime, when the lark sings its song on high, as if its little heart was wild with joy, and the chestnut-trees put on their robe of white blossom; but look, down there is that great wicked town, hiding unutterable things under its pall of smoke, *cloaca maxima* of the universe. Look at its great river, as it rolls down its mass of waters to the sea, surging around the piers of its stately bridges, how beautiful it looks glancing in the light, when the setting sun dyes its black pools crimson and purple! yet, we all know that the filth of a city is rolled along in its depths, beneath the flashes of that intolerable splendour. Just such is the huge city itself, and who are we that we should plunge into its horrible whirlpools to save drowning souls? The morality of England! I could laugh, if it did not move me to bitter tears, when I hear the self-complacent folly

which is talked about it. There is not in all God's universe a place where sin is more shameless and open than London! Away with all such unveracities. While you are congratulating yourselves upon the decency of your middle classes and the purity of your homes, all who have an opportunity of judging will tell you of the animal brutality of country places, of the rude orgies of your sea-shores, and of the systematic profligacy of your manufacturing towns. We will keep well to windward of all this. The only question with which we have to do is the mode of remedying it.

We have nothing here to do with natural remedies; indeed, I disbelieve in their efficacy, except as auxiliaries. I have a thorough scepticism as to the moral progress of man. I quite allow that we have made great intellectual advances since the Middle Ages; I am even prepared to admit that medieval men were, in many respects, very like savages; yet I do not think that we are more moral than they. As far as we can see by experience, the tendency of merely secular civilization is to produce disbelief in hell; now, without the doctrine of eternal punishment, the belief in the Christian notion of sin, as an infinite evil, necessarily disappears, and with it the doctrine of redemption. The atonement wrought by CHRIST and everlasting punishment are correlatives; if you take one out of the creed, the other necessarily shares its fate. Now, the tendency of civilization is evidently to substitute respectability, decency, and honour for the horror of sin; and there are wild passions in the

human heart which laugh such frail barriers to scorn. It may even be doubted whether a high education has any tendency to diminish sin. It may make men less noisy and less brutal, does it make them less sinful? The overwhelming interest of intellectual pursuits may, in a few rare instances, lull the passions to sleep for a time; but there are only a few gifted minds who can thus be absorbed in thought. The generality of the educated will be always bad. Certainly, English and German universities are not famous for their morals. Then, as to the masses who must ever toil and labour, whose life must be ever material, it is a mere mockery to talk to them of the blessings of education. You will fill your museums with graceful statues, by way of making them more moral. You give them a drop from the cup of knowledge, enough to excite their curiosity, and to raise in them a thirst which, like eating olives, only creates a greater capacity for sensual intoxication. In infinitesimal doses knowledge is not an anodyne. It is in vain to try to make them better by rousing in them the lust of the eye and the pride of life. I never heard that contact with civilization did much more for savages than teach them drunkenness. It intensified the effeminate weakness of the islander of the Pacific, and drove to madness the hardy Iroquois, inserting vices among the virtues of his former Spartan education. So with the wild creatures who issue in crowds into the streets of our manufacturing towns, when the bell summons or dismisses them, I do not believe that education, apart from religion, will

make them less vicious. Nay, I doubt the virtue of a Catholic gentleman unless he is devout. Would you have us, then, return to the darkness of the Middle Ages? Nay, dear reader, God has placed us all in the nineteenth century, and we must work there our appointed work. Since God so wills it, we must fling ourselves into that terrible *mêlée*, and grow pale over our books like our neighbours. We must educate our poor children to the uttermost; nay, teach them that articles are adjectives, and the girth of the equator, else they will be unable to get their living. But forgive me if I take no interest in mere education, and regret the simplicity of our ancestors. I do not regret painted windows or pointed arches, but I do mourn over the old devotion. I regret the old blue Heaven, and the time when men pointed upwards, and thought it was a firmament, a solid thing, nay, the very sapphire pavement of God's blessed throne, where JESUS was waiting for us with Mary and the angels. Is it gone for ever, then, the spontaneous outgoing of the soul to God, so much a part of self that it was unreasoning and unconscious? I hope not, provided, with all our education, we are loving, faithful, and devout.

Meanwhile, the torrent of sin is surging horribly around us. I cannot read without shuddering of the dreadful statistics of sin, and who is there to oppose it but the Church of God? A new science is springing up, which chronicles crime, and professes that, according to some unknown law, sins recur year by year, according to some regular proportion. "In

everything which concerns crime, the same numbers re-occur with a constancy which cannot be mistaken; and that is the case even with those crimes which seem quite independent of human foresight; such, for instance, as murders, which are generally committed after quarrels arising from circumstances apparently casual. Nevertheless, we know from experience that every year there not only take place nearly the same number of murders, but that even the instruments by which they are committed are employed in the same proportion." Dreadful arithmetic, each unit of which represents a tragedy where cruel lust, or the love of gain, or hatred, or revenge, play their awful part! If this be true, then the wildest passions have their terrible rhythm, and sing their mad songs with a beat, regular as the palpitations of the heart, to the frantic tune of some devil's music. Sin comes year by year in successive waves, and there is a method in its madness, as in the surging tides of the most tumultuous sea. There is even a fearful regularity in the annual numbers of public and registered suicides,* so that even the accents of despair have a measure of their own, and a system which can be ascertained. Thanks be to God, we have a supernatural charm, more potent than the spells of hell, to lull these passions to sleep. In the case of each individual soul all these calculations come to nought. You may, if you say true, prophesy the number of crimes likely to be committed in a year, in a given country, but your

* The latest researches of M. Casper confirm the statement of earlier statisticians, that suicide is more frequent among Protestants than among Catholics. Buckle's "Civilization in England," p. 56.

science is at fault, if you attempt to predict the fate of this or that man. Now, it is precisely over individual souls that the sacraments give us an unrivalled power. The world may cry to us, "Who are you who forgive sins? there is none who can do that but God." But we can only point with joy and thankfulness to Him who has said to us: "Receive ye the HOLY GHOST: whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted."

Never, at any period of the Church, were the sacraments brought to bear upon the destruction of sin as now. According to her present discipline, she almost trusts now to the sacraments alone. In the annihilation of habits of sin the Blessed Sacrament plays a part greater than at any other period of her existence. Never, at any period, was its action denied. The study of its administration in the early ages has shown us many instances, in the most rigid times, when the Holy Communion was granted to the most heinous sinners. Nevertheless, in many other instances the Church trusted to severe measures, to fasting and austerities, in order to break the power of habitual sins. Now, however, she has abolished that part of her ancient discipline. Without having lost the right, she seldom exercises her power of coercing her children. The nations have unqueened her, and she revenges herself upon them by becoming more than ever a mother. It is of a piece with her whole modern policy. In almost every case she trusts to the love and loyalty of her children. She has not abandoned her undoubted prerogatives, but all that she insists upon is a clear

stage and no favour: room for her sacraments, and a free course for the Precious Blood.

All this has much simplified the duty of a priest. He has to eliminate from his mind all notion of punishing a sinner. He is a judge, but one who must ever lean to the side of mercy. His duty is kindness to the sinner: his one object how best to free him from sin. The universal condemnation of Jansenism is the solemn protest of the Church that absolution may be given at once to the sinner on the minimum of necessary dispositions, and on the most slender possible evidence of his possessing them, and that it is her will to employ the Blessed Sacrament as the most powerful means of curing sinful habits. We have seen that the very essence of that unamiable heresy is the deferring of absolution till penance had been done, and the suspension of communion till the habit of sin had been broken. We are spared the trouble of proving these most important points, and we have only to study the action of the Holy Communion upon sin, and to find rules for its employment in this merciful work.

There is no question as to the lawfulness of allowing the Blessed Sacrament in the case of those who are guilty of single mortal sins, of whatever kind; almost as a matter of course, absolution is followed at once by Holy Communion. Nor is there even any difficulty with a habitudinarian, that is, a sinner who confesses a habit of sin for the first time. But we will suppose the case of a recidive, as he is technically called, that is, one who is continually for some time coming to confession with the same sin,

of whatever kind, intoxication, swearing, or what you will. He comes to confession quite regularly every week. He is not in any wilful proximate occasion of sin, yet such is the force of habit, that he at intervals, for a long time together, has to confess more or less instances of the same sin. What are we to think of him? can he be sincere? is he to be allowed to communicate once a week, according to the rule laid down for the generality of Christians? The resolution of these questions will oblige us to consider a little more closely the phenomena of habits.

As to the possibility of his sincerity, it would be a waste of time to stop to prove it. Every one feels that, because a man falls into sin to-day, it does not follow that he was not really resolved not to commit it yesterday. But I will go a step beyond this. I believe that, in some cases, there is a certainty of his being sincere at the moment of absolution. I mean that, supposing at that instant the temptation had presented itself to him, he was willing rather to die than to yield to it. First, it is certain that, according to the present practice of the confessional, the habitual sinner would very often receive absolution. In other words, there is a practical judgement on the part of the priests of Christendom, that in such a case a sinner is at that instant sincere, in the sense which I have attached to the word. At their peril they absolve him, because, except in rare cases which have been touched upon, a priest is obliged to form to himself a moral certainty of the good dispositions of the penitent at the moment. I cannot help think-

ing that this testimony is most valuable. Who can tell so well as a priest? Who but God and he are witnesses to the broken-heartedness of the sinner? The Holy Spirit gives him a supernatural instinct over and above that which he has acquired through long intercourse with souls. Who, like a priest, can judge of souls, who lay themselves open to him as much as one man can make himself known to another? As for myself, I can only say that my own experience has made me think more highly of mankind than ever I did before. It has given me a glimpse of the feelings of JESUS towards poor human nature, so powerfully attracted to good, yet so miserably weak under temptation.

I know that it has been said in former times by a famous French preacher, and an authority not to be despised, that a very great many absolutions are invalid; but I must confess that I am a weak brother in this instance, and that the proposition scandalizes me. I cannot bear to think of such a waste of the Precious Blood, and I do not believe that God would permit it. The thought would paralyse all the efforts of priests. It would reduce their office to a miserable sham. Nothing could be more fatal to sinners if such an idea got abroad, for one of their most powerful motives to resisting the temptation to fall again into sin, is the thought that they are again in a state of grace. The statement seems to me to be one of those many echoes of Jansenism which startle us so often in the writers of the period.*

* "Il y a donc bien des confessions nulles? J'en conviens, et là-dessus n'oserais pas presque déclarer tout ce que je pense."—Bourdaloue, "Pensées sur le Sacrement de Penitence."

Furthermore, it seems to me that theology is strongly against such a painful assertion. Let us remember how St Alphonso insists upon its being the duty of a priest not to give absolution unless he has a moral certainty of the adequate dispositions of his penitent. On the other hand, let us see what he considers sufficient. A recidive, he says, is not to be absolved without what he calls extraordinary marks of contrition. Amongst them he reckons the coming to confession at a time when there is no external motive to do so; as, for instance, when no pressure of Paschal duty urges him on, if he has put himself to inconvenience in order to approach the sacraments. What greater proof can there be that the saint considers in such a case the spontaneous coming to confession in itself to be a considerable presumption in favour of the good dispositions of the penitent? Let us consider all that is involved in the act of approaching the Sacrament of Penance in the case of a good Catholic, who has the faith in him. What should bring him to confession at all but the strong wish to be in favour with God, and to get rid of his sins? The time is passed when the world recompensed devotion. Tartuffe might be a reality in the seventeenth century; he could hardly exist in the nineteenth. One advantage of the present abnormal position of the Church is, that it has cleared us of hypocrites. When a man may proclaim himself on the housetops to be Turk, Jew, or Infidel, there is little merit in sincerity, and little temptation to be false. The chances are enormously in favour of a conversion to the Catholic Church being thoroughly

sincere. So, too, with confession; what possible reason has a man for going to confess his sins week after week, except that he is manfully struggling with a bad habit, and determined by the grace of God to overcome it? I am supposing that he has diligently prepared himself. He has in the quiet of his solitude put himself face to face with God. He has heartily detested his sin before the crucifix and the Blessed Sacrament. He has resolved to die rather than commit it again. He has made up his mind to a humiliating confession to a fellow-creature who may be weary of hearing the same tale, who may lose his temper and cast him off. I say that here is every guarantee for sincerity. Besides, there is nothing in theology to forbid our believing that in the confessional, previous to absolution, there are actual graces granted to the penitent, greater than at any other time or place. Are we not told that the act of contrition must be supernatural, and whence should a supernatural thing come except from Heaven? I believe that there and then the Holy Spirit comes upon the poor sinner kneeling at the feet of the priest, and often intensifies his poor act of sorrow, so that his heart is filled with grief, and that at that moment he would rather suffer anything than commit the sin again. At all events, no one can prove that I am wrong, and it seems to me more in keeping with the character of God.

It will be well to insist upon this, for it is a question which necessarily affects the conduct of a priest towards such sinners. If he considers that they most probably are insincere, if he doubts the

validity of the absolution which he gives them, it will be impossible for him to be as willing to grant them the Holy Communion as I believe he should. I am not speaking of reckless and desperate sinners; there are few, indeed, of such who come to the tribunal of penance at all. I am contemplating the case of a sinner who demonstrates his sincerity by coming regularly to confession, notwithstanding his habitual falls, and I wish to vindicate his right to the Blessed Sacrament, by showing that his subsequent fall does not prevent his having a real, efficacious determination not to sin at the moment of absolution. Our imagination is excited by the number and the continuance of his falls. We ask ourselves if a being who, after the most solemn promises, in a short time commits the same sin again, can by any possibility be sincere? Does it not seem far more simple to say at once that he never was sincere; by which I mean that, although he himself thought that he was resolved not to commit sin, yet, in point of fact, he really had never made up his mind to give up sin and to love God? Of course, if this view be taken, the consequence is that he cannot be absolved, and consequently, cannot receive the Holy Communion.

I cannot think that this is Our Blessed Lord's will: it certainly is not the way of the Church, as we have seen. Furthermore, the fact of our wonderfully complicated and mysterious nature cannot be resolved upon a theory such as this. Certainly, there are numberless instances where men give the most positive proofs of their sincerity at one moment,

yet soon after apparently belie them. Who does not remember the story of the great man who had fallen a slave to the habit of opium eating ? He was resolved to break his chains at any cost, and he hired men to stand at the door of every druggist's shop in Bristol, with orders forcibly to prevent his entrance when the fit of desire came on again. Was it possible to give greater proofs of real, efficacious sincerity than such strong measures as this ? A literary man, whose name was famous all over England for genius, gravity, and virtue, publishes his fatal propensity amongst the porters and cabmen of his native town, and risks his reputation in order to render his indulgence, as he thought, impossible. Alas ! poor human nature ! when the imperious desire for opium comes on again, he repairs to the chemist's shop, threatens with an action for assault the very men whom he had paid to oppose his passage, and purchases the drug. He shelters himself under no sophistry, for he believes that this indulgence is criminal ; yet health, reputation, virtue, religion, are powerless before the overmastering habit. What does all this prove but the mobility of the will ? We are men, not angels ; and a part of our condition as men is that our will is subject to all manner of change. It would surely be most unphilosophical to say that we do not really will a thing at one moment, because at another we will its contrary. Neither let us complain of our nature ; if we are not fixed in good, like the seraphim, at least we are not eternally stereotyped in evil, like the demons.

This, however, is not the whole account of the

matter; while, on the one hand, the will of the opium eater was variable, on the other hand, the habit to which he was subject was tending in him to become something fixed. This tendency, it is true, can never become irremediable on this side the grave, for it is ever absolutely in the power of the individual to overcome it by the grace of God; yet it must be allowed that the habit must be taken into account when we weigh the amount of criminality involved in the act. It is the most terrible punishment of sin that, by a law of our nature, each act of wickedness leaves an effect on our souls which predisposes us to another. It is the reward of innocence that a very great guarantee against any sin is the never having committed it; while on the contrary, sin is punished by the fact that its repeated acts produce a fatal facility in guilt, which at last approaches to an impossibility of doing otherwise. While the wild beast within us has never tasted blood he is comparatively quiet, but when once he has imbrued his lips in it there arises a thirst which grows into a furious craving. All sin partakes of the nature of opium eating.

Here, again, let us not accuse our nature or its God. The law of habit tells in favour of virtue as well as of vice. It enables us to be set in good as well as in evil. We acquire a dexterity in all that is good, so that we act well unconsciously, as a good musician plays beautiful music without an effort. Chastity, gentleness, and temperance become part of ourselves, instead of costing struggles beneath which, in the long run, our feeble nature would

succumb. We need not murmur, then, if the same law takes effect upon us, in the case of guilt, and if acts of sin as well as of virtue produce habits which become second nature.

Woe to him who contravenes the laws of God's universe! Woe to him who by an act of mortal sin, makes self the centre instead of God! In that very self there lies an infinite capacity of evil, beyond what we suspect, and when once the sleeping demon within us is aroused by an act of sin, we have unchained a power the result of which none can prophesy. I am not going into the philosophy of habits; we need only look at facts. Take the case of a passion for drink. Who has not known instances of men who would give anything to get rid of the habit, and yet, humanly speaking, cannot? A man knows himself to be on the high road to ruin; health, reputation, employment, all are going; wife and children, nay, he himself, are starving. He has had *delirium tremens*, and is threatened with it again. He knows that all hell will soon be visibly about his bed. I believe that man when he says that he would give the wide world to free himself from the horrid slavery of drunkenness. I believe him even when he says that he is unable to do without drink. He has created within himself an imperative craving, a preternatural void, boundless, and insatiable. There are times when he is willing to immolate all that he holds dearest on earth on the altar of this terrible self. Like every other sinner, he has been expending his own life, burning away his powers of body and soul, and when the artificial excitement is gone, then

there come on the awful tedium and the infinite ennui which make life intolerable till the passion is satisfied again. His physical organization helps to rivet his chains; he has been overtasking and over-exciting some of his organs, and he wants external galvanic shocks and artificial fires to rouse them. Nay, they suck up vital power from other portions of his frame, so that all his powers go into commission to some set of organs, which cry out for incessant satisfaction, and domineer over the whole. Miserable power that we have to spoil our own being. It is over-excitement which kills us, says a wise physician. It is excitement rather than the love of sin which leads us to do wrong, says the moralist. Men would do anything to break the dull monotony of life; then sin once indulged grows into a passion, and passion into a habit, and they are slaves. The whole equilibrium of their being is destroyed; they become an incarnation of one vice. They have made themselves after their own image, and they must take the consequences.

I know nothing more dreadful than the power of habit; yet there are two sides to the question. Let us observe that this law of our nature takes effect independently of our will. Each act, of course, by which the habit is formed, is wilful; but the habit itself, that is, the facility of sinning, which is increased by the individual act, exists whether we will or no. No one wishes to contract this evil quality which superinduces a sort of propension to sin; and which approaches to becoming a necessity. Men wish to enjoy themselves moderately, not to be the

slaves of sin. The habit comes on, nay, what is more to the purpose, it remains in spite of them. It is, therefore, perfectly conceivable that a man may have repented of his acts of sin, may have turned to God, and yet the habit, that is, the propension to sin, may remain. Let us never forget that, theologically speaking, the habit of sin is not habitual sin. Let us take, for instance, De Lugo's view of the matter.* Habitual sin is that effect of mortal sin, by which we are permanently hateful to God, till it is pardoned. The act is done and completely over; it has passed into things which are not; nevertheless, we are in a state of sin; there remains something in us which makes us to be, as long as it lasts, detestable to God. Now, De Lugo expressly denies that this something is a vicious habit. The act may have been a single isolated act, and have produced no vicious habit; yet, for all that, we have contracted the stain of habitual sin. "Even supposing," he argues, "the production of the habit were in some way prevented, yet the man would still be a sinner. Again, when habitual sin is taken away (by forgiveness), generally speaking, vicious habits still remain in the (pardoned) sinner. Or else the vicious habit may cease, and be cured by acts of the contrary virtue; but such virtuous acts cannot take away habitual sin." It is perfectly clear, then, that the propension to sin is not incompatible with a state of grace; it can co-exist, therefore, with a true attrition, with a firm purpose of amendment; in a word, with sincerity.

* De Lugo. "De Pœn." Disp. VII, sect. 1.

Now, this is most important for our purpose. It follows from all this that a man may, at the moment of absolution, have a most firm purpose never to fall again, and yet the overmastering passion may recur, and he may again commit the same sin. It follows again that there are two sorts of sinners under the influence of guilty habits; the one sort have not in any sense been converted, and have no real will to get rid of the bad habit. The other sort really detest sin, and take measures to prevent it, yet they fall because the habit is not yet rooted out. The two cases are evidently utterly different. The one falls into sin passively, under the power of habit without a struggle; the other only falls after a long combat, rises again at once, and is still resolved in spite of all to overcome the hateful propensity. In the former case the act of sin is intensified by the headlong violence of the propension; and, consequently, its guilt is increased. In the latter the habit diminishes the voluntariness of the act, and therefore the guilt is lessened by it.* Very rarely, indeed, does the obstinate sinner frequent the tribunal of penance, while the sinner who hates the habit, as we are supposing, goes to confession every week. Even when both confess their sins, there are notable differences. The sinner who is sincere, carefully avoids all occasions of temptation, follows diligently all the counsels which are given him, and the remedies prescribed, however painful; is constant about his devotions, and prepares himself

* *Peccatum non aggravatur imo videtur minus grave propter consuetudinem et habitum præcedentem. De Lugo. Disp. xvi sect. 4, 7.*

with care for the sacraments. The characteristics of the other may be summed up in one word—carelessness. Is it not plain that these two sinners are the antipodes the one of the other, and must be treated in a perfectly different manner?

We are only concerned with the sinner who is in earnest. With respect to him, we have arrived at many truths from what has been said. Notwithstanding the fact that the habit or propension still remains within him, and his consequent liability to fall into sin, he is most probably in the grace of God after absolution; for, on the one hand, that habit is perfectly distinct from habitual sin, and does not interfere with his being in God's favour; and, on the other, his whole behaviour, his coming to confession, his subsequent struggle, are all arguments to prove that he was in earnest at the time. Then, again the existence of the propension accounts for what otherwise tells so much against him—his constant falls. He has liberty enough, no doubt, for sin, yet the awfulness of temptation at the time of his falls must be taken into account. It is not God's way to cure a sinner of the kind that we are contemplating all at once. He must fight his way back again to peace. Meanwhile, during the awful struggle, God watches over His poor creature with the tenderness of a mother, and the priest, who stands in His place, must second His designs. In no case has he more need to be CHRIST-like. His heart must be full of compassion, his demeanour of kindness. Not a word of reproach or impatience must pass his lips. The sinner, above all, requires en-

couragement; he has need of all his faith to believe that God still loves him, and that in spite of the fiendlike power of temptation and of the frequency of his falls, he will infallibly be cured of the fearful habit.

On these principles, it is easy to answer the question proposed as to the frequency of communion to be accorded to sinners. The priest must first carefully ascertain to which of the two classes of habitual sinners the penitent belongs. It would be a fatal error to apply to the careless sinner the rules only laid down for the penitent who is in earnest. An indiscriminate application of frequent communion to all those who are involved in habits of sin would lead to dreadful illusions and to monstrous falls. But when once the confessor has satisfied himself of the sincerity of the penitent, then let him act boldly. Frequent communion in such a case is, in the long run, a specific. Here, above all, is to be applied the rule which has been laid down, that the only limit is the good of the penitent.

In support of this view, let me quote a recent author who deserves to be consulted in all questions connected with communion. It seems to me that there may be cases in which the spiritual good of the sinner requires that he should be allowed, for a time at least, to communicate frequently, in proportion to his needs, as soon as his dispositions are such as to warrant his being absolved. Among these cases I would instance states of great temptation, and of habits of sin not yet entirely rooted out. Thus, when a confessor foresees that a sinner

capable of absolution will fall again from the violence of temptation, unless he has fresh grace soon given to him, he may allow him for a time to communicate once every two or three days, or even oftener, if necessary. For it is certain that the Holy Eucharist represses movements of the flesh more than the other sacraments. We know by experience, says Cardinal Toletus, that many Christians, who were a prey to numberless crimes and vices, have been so thoroughly converted by frequent communion, that during the rest of their lives they have never, or hardly ever, committed another grave sin. It is for this reason that the Fathers of the Church call the august Sacrament of the Eucharist a divine alchemy, a burning transformation, where the penitent soul is cured of bad habits, is purified and sanctified more and more, is gradually made all divine, and is changed into the likeness of God. Saint Alphonso Liguori tells us of a fact which bears upon this point. A nobleman was so miserably enslaved by a terrible habit of sin that he despaired of ever being able to overcome it. His confessor once asked him if he had ever fallen on the day of his communion? On his answering that he never had, he made him receive the Blessed Sacrament every day for several weeks, and in a short time he was completely freed from this horrible vice.

We have high authority, therefore, for fearlessly using the Blessed Sacrament as a remedy for sin.* We, none of us, have sufficient faith in the *opus*

* "Principes de direction pour la Communion Fréquente," p. 169.

operatum of the sacraments. You, above all, priests, monks, and spouses of CHRIST, to whom He has entrusted the glorious mission of reforming souls lost in sin, do not forget that JESUS is above all the Good Shepherd in the Holy Communion. An institution more dear to the Sacred Heart than a reformatory of any kind it is not easy to imagine. Yet, in proportion to its dignity, is the fearful difficulty of your mission. Sickly sentimentality invests the sinner at a distance with the attributes of a Magdalene, but if there be any element of romance in the attraction felt towards the sinner, and in the vocation of those who have to deal with them, how soon it fades away before the reality. Even when want, and pain, and hunger have long since cured the miserable beings of the positive taste for a life of wickedness, yet the whole character is often utterly spoiled and destroyed. What is there left to work upon? The soul that looks out of the hard, stony eye, is lost to all sense of shame and degradation. There is an animal love of ease and hatred of work. The reckless outcasts from society turn fiercely round upon their best friends as though they were their gaolers. Who can bind down to regularity the wild, restless creatures, and reduce to rule the will which has been accustomed to follow every external impulse? Or, rather, all will has gone, and has given place to the most irrational caprice. When you think you are sure of them, in times of calmest seeming a breath will raise a tempest of fiendlike passion, or obstinate sulkiness, and they who appeared but just now real penitents all at once

show the rage or the sullenness of a captive beast. Deep down in their hearts there lie the memories of unutterable things, which will not rest, and ever and anon rise up to taunt them and drive them to madness, while the body itself craves the excitement of drink, and feels all the consequent restlessness of the privation. What can be done with a being so spoiled as that? What motive can you put before those whose feelings have lost all delicacy, who take all charity as a right, who are impervious to gratitude, and so wrapped in present fancied pleasures or dislikes as to forget that the past was a hell on earth and to be ever recklessly ready to plunge into it again? All the beauty of human nature is trodden out of them, while sin with its dreadful chemistry has burned itself into their souls in characters of fire. Above all, they are false down to the very heart's core. Who can penetrate down beneath the leprous crust of insincerity, and make them children again? Oh! how quickly all sentimentality vanishes before such an apparition as that. What a temptation to take the miserable creatures at their word and bid them begone, when in some gust of absurd passion they ask to go back into the waste howling wilderness which awaits them outside the gates of the monastery? How hard not to treat them as parts of a great flock from which a tainted sheep must be expelled, lest it infect the whole? It is difficult not to become wooden, to act by invariable rules, and to sacrifice all to organization and discipline. There is no remedy for this tendency but the realization of the dignity of the individual

soul. Yes, it too has been redeemed by the Precious Blood. JESUS loves even such a one unutterably. That soul is to be respected and treated with reverence, to be studied and cared for individually. The Spouse of CHRIST must not shrink from contact with such a being; she must bear with impertinence, brutal rudeness, and irrational caprice. She must treat such a one with separate kindness, and win back the proud soul with the sweetness of CHRIST-like humility. GOD forbid that the penitent should be allowed to go, for to quit the convent is to return to hell, while the sinner who remains within its walls is at least within reach of the Precious Blood.

Here, then, is our remedy for what is otherwise desperate; an implicit trust in the action of the sacraments. Let them have free course and be glorified. There must be no restrictions on their number; they must be no part of convent police or discipline. There need be no nervous fear of disrespect in allowing creatures still so corrupt to approach JESUS. He will accept the minimum of dispositions, provided the bare essentials are there. He will be indulgent to outbursts of temper, to sallies of caprice, in one whose efforts to be ordinarily good require struggles which in others would be almost heroic. It is in such cases as these that we must remember the supernaturalness of the sacraments. I do not overlook the natural effects of kindness. The very opening of the heart to a fellow-creature is the shivering of pride, the destruction of that terrible reserve in which the soul had wrapt

itself up, and bade a sullen defiance to GOD and to the human race. It is the rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre; a creature can do that; but it wants the voice of GOD to recall to life the mass of corruption which was once a human being. O JESUS! her CREATOR, come forth with Thine Almighty power, for there is a work which Thou alone canst do. Here is a corruption fouler than that which lay in the rocky tomb, a dead soul unburied and tainting the air, walking the earth, and possessing the horrible vitality of infection. Oh! see how JESUS loved her; He has wept tears of blood over her misery, and now He delegates one to pour His Precious Blood over her, and in His name to resuscitate her. And hardly has she been restored to life when He comes in person from the tabernacle to assure her of His love, to calm the fierceness of her passions, and to touch within her the very fountain of her affections, and bid them flow out afresh towards her GOD. The hard heart which had stiffened into a fierce hatred of all living things can feel again the joy of love.

Such is the mode of operation of the Blessed Sacrament, and such are the miracles which it works. The moment that our dispositions are sufficient to remove an obstacle, then there flow down upon us graces to which they were utterly inadequate. They create new dispositions which did not exist before. It is for this reason that all are invited to come, the corrupt to receive incorruption, the unclean to receive purity, the passionate to receive meekness. They need not wait to have formed habits of purity

and meekness. Let them come as they are, with only the will to be pure and meek. And because we have still the wretched power to destroy the effect of the Blessed Sacrament when temptation comes, because the seven devils may return, for this reason the Holy Communion must be reiterated. Fear not, poor child, if you have only struggled in the meantime, each communion has made you better, and each fall leaves you less and less weak, till at last the habit of virtue is established, and you fall no more.

Such is the ever-blessed instrument which God has put into our hands for the reformation of a sinner. I do not, of course, for a moment deny the absolute necessity of natural means to form habits of virtue. There must be patient, unremitting kindness, and an imperturbable patient sweetness. These are indispensable conditions of success; but the real cause is JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER VI. THE COMMUNIONS OF THE WORLDLY

WE read much in spiritual books of the last century of a large and troublesome class of Christians, ladies especially, who attempted to unite together God and the world. The discourses of Massillon and Bourdaloue are filled with declamations against the monstrous union. In reading the memoirs of a famous time, its festivities and its follies, it suddenly strikes us, that all those brilliant beings were Catholics. Amidst accounts of balls and theatres we come across sermons of Bossuet, spiritual letters of Fénelon, visits to the Carmelites of the Rue St Jacques, benedictions and communions. It is a comfort to think that God was represented there, that amidst their follies and their sins they said their prayers before a crucifix, they knelt in confessionals, and received the Viaticum when they died. Yet, when we come to gather from the sarcasms of a truculent Guilleré, and even from the milder warnings of Surin, that some of these worldly women laid claim to great piety and were frequent communicants, we must confess that a series of unpleasant questions rises up in our minds. These ladies, we will suppose, were models of propriety, yet there are in Scripture most uncomfortable denunciations against the world, even as distinguished from the flesh or the devil. Or can we by any stretch of Christian charity exempt Parisian society from being "the world?" I think not and if not, on what principle can those who are of it be frequent communicants? Is a course of balls,

operas, and all that is involved in a life of the world, compatible with communicating twice or three times a week? Is daily communion (for such things have been) to be allowed to a lady who lives in such a round of gaiety? Is the nocturnal ball a fit preparation for the morning's communion?

All these questions are perfectly distinct from any which we have treated as yet, and require an answer. Such things are not quite matters of history. Human nature is not changed since the time of Louis XIV, and probably we should find the same heart beating beneath silks and satins in a ball-room at Paris, Vienna, or Brussels in the nineteenth century, as at Versailles and Marly in the first days of their splendour. There must always be the same tendency in mankind to enjoy both God and the world. I am utterly ignorant of the fashionable world in London, and I am quite prepared to suppose that such anomalies do not exist there. Without, however, pretending to any superhuman sagacity, we may safely affirm that the time is not far distant when such may be the case. There is no likelihood that the work of conversion amongst the higher classes should cease, the number of Catholics, therefore, brought into direct contact with the world must necessarily increase. The world, which is of no religion, and piques itself upon its liberality, will receive them with open arms. We believe, then, that the question is at present speculative, it may, however, soon become practical. Let us put it then plainly in a concrete shape, and ask whether the gaieties of a London season are compatible with frequent communion?

If a Pagan were to take up the New Testament by chance, he would certainly be puzzled by what is said there about the world. He might even fancy that there was some inconsistency in it. On the one hand, with what yearning love and tenderness is it spoken of? "God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten SON." "God sent not His SON into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him." Our very hearts leap within us for joy when we hear JESUS call Himself *Salvator Mundi*, *Lux mundi*—the Saviour of the world, the Light of the world. O Blessed JESUS! why is Thy curse upon that world of Thine deep in proportion to the depth of Thy love for it? Why on the eve of Thy death except it from Thy prayer? Why art Thou so tender and so kind to sinners, so hopeful to the end of their conversion, while, as for the world, Thou dost treat it as Thy desperate enemy, as though there was a fatality upon it which compelled it to hate Thee and Thine?

The apostles take up the anathemas of JESUS. St James says to us, "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." The apostle of love is the most solemn in his warnings, "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the FATHER is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the FATHER, but is of the world." St Paul is not less energetic. He looks

upon the world as under the power of the Evil One, for he speaks of "walking according to the course of the world, and according to the prince of the power of the air." He considers that the very purpose for which CHRIST died was "to deliver us from this present wicked world." Can anything be more evident than that it is a first principle of Christianity, that the world is thoroughly and utterly bad? Yet, how careful is the same apostle St Paul to remind the Christians that they still have duties in and for this world. He modifies one of his rules expressly, because if they followed it literally it would be tantamount to quitting the world.* He legislates for the behaviour of Christians at a banquet given by a heathen, taking it for granted that Christians were to mix with the great world. Evidently he who wished us to be dead and crucified to the world did not intend us to cease to be gentlemen, or to set the laws of society at defiance.

Christian dogma presents the same twofold view of the world and our relations to it. The history of the Church has been a life-long struggle with Manicheism in every possible shape. She has ever hated the doctrine that matter is intrinsically bad. Deep as is the corruption of original sin, she has anathematized the Lutheran doctrine, that the soul has become substantially evil through the fall. She consecrates human joys, and respects all the legitimate affections of the human heart. She teaches that marriage has been erected into a sacrament. She burns incense before the body of a Christian

* 1 Cor. v, 10; 1 Cor. x, 27.

even when the soul has departed from it. Nothing was ever so un-Puritanical as the Church. She abhors the gloom of a Presbyterian Sabbath. Her holidays are days of universal brightness. No joy is excessive if it be not profligate; no beauty comes amiss to her, provided it be chaste. She gives her blessing upon all that is lovely. The walls of her churches glow with the colours of the Italian painter and Spanish maidens* dance before the Blessed Sacrament. Yet, with all this largeness of heart, this detestation of unnatural gloom, the ritual of the Church seems to imply that a blight and a curse have passed upon creation. The very blessing which she gives to our dwelling places and our fields, and to the choicest fruits of the earth, assumes the appearance of an exorcism. She will not use the oil, and the balsam, and the salt, nor the precious gums for incense, nor even the pure, bright water, till the cross has signed and purified them; as though the breath of the Evil One had passed over all creation, and the whole earth required redemption. It is a principle of Christianity that the world is bad, and that worldliness is sinful. Riches are spoken of as a positive misfortune, while purple, fine linen, and feasting every day are the highroad to everlasting fire.

It is evident that Christianity has a most peculiar view of the external world. It looks upon it neither with the jaundiced eye of the Puritan nor with the

* This seems to refer to the religious dance performed before the Blessed Sacrament in the Cathedral at Seville, on certain occasions—amongst others the three days of Carnival. The performers are choir-boys and go by the name of *los seises*.—ED.

licentious gaze of the Pagan. Volumes might be written upon it, but for our purpose it will be sufficient to say that earthly goods of whatever kind, riches, pleasure, honour, are not looked upon as evil in themselves, but as tending to produce in the mind a certain positive wickedness called worldliness. This worldliness is only not a sin because it is rather a state than an act, or, if you will, it is a name for an attitude of the soul towards God which is sinful.

Christianity has not so much introduced a new system of morals as altered the whole point of view in which men looked upon life and earthly goods. It holds, as a first principle, that God is to be loved above all things, in such a sense that, if a creature appreciatively loves any created thing more than God, he commits a mortal sin. Of course, this, like every other mortal sin, requires, at least, the possibility of advertence. For this reason, in a nature so carried away by its emotions as ours, it is conceivable that, at a given time, the soul might be so fixed on a lawful object of affection that it should love it more than God, and yet be unconscious of its want of charity. When, however, the affection for an earthly object, or pursuit for a long time together so engrosses the soul, as to superinduce an habitual neglect of God, and a continued omission of necessary duties, then it is very difficult for the soul to be unconscious of its violation of the first commandment, or, if it is unconscious, not to be answerable to God for the hardness of heart which prevents its actual advertence. It follows from this, that to

adhere with the whole force of the will to any earthly thing whatsoever, however innocent, is sinful. GOD is the only legitimate, ultimate end of all His creatures. To be their final end is as much one of His attributes as Mercy or Infinity, so that to place the end of our being elsewhere than in GOD, is to deprive Him in our minds of one of His prerogatives. This one principle changes our whole mode of viewing the earth and all that belongs to it. It transposes the Christian's standpoint from this world to the next. Wealth, pleasure, power, honour, assume a totally different aspect when it is unlawful to pursue them for their own sake without reference to GOD. Let us clearly master this idea. We will suppose a merchant entirely engrossed in the acquisition of riches. No one will say that to amass wealth is in any way sinful. It has never come before him to do anything dishonest in order to increase his property, and he has never formed an intention of doing so. Nevertheless, if his heart is so fixed on gain that his affection for it is greater than the amount of his love for GOD, even though he has formed explicitly no design of acting dishonestly, he falls at once out of a state of grace. Let him but elicit from his will an act, by which he virtually appreciates riches more than GOD, that act of preferring a creature to GOD, if accompanied with sufficient advertence, is enough of itself to constitute a mortal sin. GOD sees his heart, and if, through the overwhelming pursuit of sin, the amount of its love for Himself is overbalanced by the amount of its love for riches, that man, when adequately

conscious of his state, is in mortal sin, and if he died would be lost for ever. The first commandment is as binding as the seventh, and a man who does not love GOD above all things is as guilty as the actual swindler or the thief. The case is precisely the same with all worldly goods whatever; science, literary fame, advancement in life, pleasure, ease, beauty, success of all kinds, whether by the charms of body or of mind, all these are of the earth earthly; and if any one of them is appreciated by us not only to the exclusion of GOD, but more than GOD, we are positively committing sin. The Christian's heart must be in paradise, not here below. He must be prepared by GOD's grace to give up anything on earth rather than sacrifice his hopes of Heaven. This is not a counsel of perfection, but an indispensable duty. His final end must be to see GOD in the invisible world, not anything in the world of sight.

If any one had stated this doctrine to a heathen, he would have been treated as a madman. A Pagan would have perfectly understood that he must not injure his fellow-men, that he must not pursue pleasure to such an extent as to harm his body or to stain his mind; but he would have stared at you as a portent if you had announced to him that he must lay a restraint upon himself, because it is a duty for a man to reserve his affections for anything beyond the grave. If you would be great, fix your heart on some earthly object, power, science, country; but if only it be high and honourable, then pursue it with the full swing of all your powers of body and soul; such would be heathen ethics at

their very best. The very idea of its being wrong to love the world would never enter into their minds. The word was not in their vocabulary, nor the idea in their intellect. They might have arrived at the notion that the unrestrained indulgence of the flesh is wrong; some of them believed in an evil principle, in the powers of darkness, in Titans fighting against gods; but before the shadow of the Cross fell upon the earth no one amongst them imagined that worldliness was sinful. It is an exclusively Christian principle, because the Bible alone has expressly taught it to be a duty to love God above all things, and a sin to love anything more than God.

It is easy for us to understand now the meaning of worldliness. It is a sin against Our LORD's chief and first commandment, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The soul, through culpable negligence, is so utterly engrossed with earthly objects that God has sunk in the balance of its estimation. This is why Our LORD hates it so much. Everything depends upon the first principle upon which our actions proceed; the ultimate end of our thoughts, words, and deeds. It seldom rises to our lips, or appears on the surface, but it is quietly taken for granted; it imbues and penetrates all our being. With a worldly man it is the world, with a Christian it is God. Hence all is twisted and distorted by worldliness. No one thing is right because the whole point of view is wrong. The worldly man tacitly assumes that the world is paramount, and thus, without any overt act, God has noiselessly lapsed

into the second place. Alas! when such is the case, GOD is nowhere. Heaven help the man then. First principles are gone, what hope is there of recovery? The disease is structural and organic. The very fever of passion is less dangerous than the slow atrophy of worldliness. The salt has lost its savour; wherewith shall it be salted? The eye is dark; no wonder if the whole being is plunged in outer darkness.

For this reason, also, Our LORD always speaks more hopefully of the publican and the sinner than of the Pharisee, the impersonation of the then respectable (Oh! that the words should ever be found together!) religious world. Poor children of sin! from the touch of whose very garments the daughters of the world would shrink as a pollution, in the depths of your degradation, you have still one element of conversion, that you are conscious of it. But there are moral leprosies more hideous in the sight of GOD than yours, because more irreclaimable and more thorough. There is nothing in worldliness to alarm the conscience, because it is quite consistent with propriety. Its characteristic, as distinguished from the flesh and the devil, is the being engrossed with some worldly object, which is not openly vicious, to the prejudice of GOD. There has been no terrible moment of awful rupture with GOD by an external act of sin. GOD has been quietly extruded from the soul by the growth of love for something else, rather than directly expelled. There has been no catastrophe, no crash or fearful fall, to alarm virtue and astonish respectability. The love of GOD has died an easy natural death without a struggle or an agony.

I think I hear it said: Is it possible that such things can be? If worldliness be the absence of God's love, the gradual, silent lowering of religion within us till it is not sufficient to enable us to elicit an act of sufficient sorrow for sin, then, of course, communion is out of the question. But, is there not a great deal of rhetoric in all this? Is it not an exaggeration to assign such deadly effects to a plunge into a London or a Paris season? Surely some of us are meant by God to be in the world, and is it not possible to be in the world without being of it? May not a person be worldly without losing the grace of God? Here are a number of questions which, I allow, require an answer. I even allow that there is some truth in what they imply; and we will try to extract it from the great falsehood, and to exhibit them separately.

It is perfectly true to say that many are meant by God to be in the world. Truism as it is, it is necessary to dwell upon it. Many married persons, whether from education or from some other reason which I cannot tell, have an uneasy kind of feeling, as though the cloister was the normal state of Christians, and life elsewhere a sort of Christianity on sufferance, tolerated on account of the hardness of our hearts; and only not bad without being positively good. Heaven forbid that we should think thus of the sanctities of home. A vocation to the cloister is the exception. The majority of mankind have a positive vocation from God to spend their lives out of religion, and would be out of place in it. Christianity has ennobled the domestic life, and consecrated all its affections.

It is also perfectly true to say that it is possible to be in the world and not to be of it. In order, however, for this assertion to be of any avail against what I have said, it would be necessary to make out this possibility in the case of those who give themselves up body and soul to the fashionable world. Let us see how far it can be made out.

There is a strange tendency in human nature to create worlds for itself. What we mean by a world is an all-in-all, some particular pursuit, calling, or state, which becomes to us the universe. The soul of man cannot take in the whole earth; whatever he does has, therefore, a tendency to absorb and engross him as though nothing else existed. Thus, the great world comes to be divided into a number of smaller ones, sphere within sphere, the inhabitants of one being often almost as little to those of another as though they lived in different planets. Thus, we have the literary, the scientific, the political, and the mercantile world. Each trade, each locality, each street, square, and lane, tends to be a little world. Thus does our very language bear witness to the fact that the heart of man is ever apt to be perfectly absorbed by something which becomes everything to him, and shuts out everything else. His horizon is essentially bounded. Beyond a certain point a sort of mental fog comes over him, and shuts out not only God's daylight, but even the other portions of the universe here below. Even the holiest natural things have this tendency. Home itself may thus become a little world. Especially in England, where domestic affections are so strong, where every man's house is his castle, and every one

strives to be independent, and to concentrate under his own roof all that he can possibly want, there is a great danger lest the family should become the universe. A special kind of worldliness comes on, a certain family selfishness, by which the soul becomes so engrossed in the narrow circle of home that God Himself stands in danger of being excluded.

Whilst, however, anything whatsoever may be turned into a world, it must be owned that some things are more intrinsically worldly than others; that is, they have a far greater tendency to exclude God than others; and, of all others, the most worldly is the fashionable world. All other things have something in them which can be turned to God. All involve some work, some duty, some self-sacrifice. At the very worst they want but God to penetrate them in order to be in their place. A wife can never love her husband and children too well, provided she loves God above all. But how can God enter into a mode of life of which pleasure is the sole occupation—the ultimate end? It is like a proximate occasion of sin, it must be abandoned; it cannot be turned to God. The meekest of saints* has told us that balls are to be enjoyed as we eat mushrooms, few in number and far between; what would he have said if these mushrooms became the staple food, and life is turned into a long, wild dance? No one but a Puritan ever said that dancing was wrong, or concerts offensive to God, or even the theatre a mortal sin; but it is the whole mode of life that is

* "The Devout Life," by St Francis of Sales, Part III, ch. xxxiii.

hopelessly, desperately wrong. It is positively sinful to make pleasure the end of life. It is sinful, because it absorbs the soul, and it tends inevitably to forgetfulness of GOD. Yes, thank Heaven, it is possible to be in the world and not to be of it; but it is absurd to say that one is not worldly who plunges into all the gaieties of Paris or London, who enjoys and is so engrossed with them as practically to forget the sense of duty. As well tell me that concupiscence is not the flesh, or witchcraft the devil, as that the London season is not the world. How, then, can he not be worldly, who is so far engrossed in it as to neglect his duty to GOD?

Nor is it only because GOD is forgotten that worldliness is wrong. As might be expected, the whole character is spoiled; and this is a thing to be peculiarly observed. Many are deceived by the fact that worldliness is not mentioned among the seven deadly sins. No Garden of the Soul reckons it among the black catalogue on which we examine our consciences. No one dreams of accusing himself of worldliness, yet it is part of Christian ethics to consider it as awfully wrong. How is this? We might at once answer the question by saying that worldliness is only contrary to perfection; and as no one accuses himself of not going on to perfection, so no one dreams of making it a matter of confession that he is worldly. Yet, after all, is this answer satisfactory? Surely, a thing which is classed with the flesh and the devil, a thing anathematized by OUR LORD, cannot be a simple imperfection. There are certain faults which are not, strictly speaking,

sins, but which run through a whole character, and are more terrible sources of sin than even sinful passions. Selfishness, for instance, is not a special sin forbidden by any of the ten commandments. It is a tone of mind, a spirit, or as the old Greeks would have called it, an *ethos*, which imbues and penetrates the whole being. The uppermost thought in the mind, the foremost image in the imagination, is this pitiful self. There it looms, large, portentous, engrossing, filling the whole field of vision, blotting out God and the universe. The consequence is that though not forbidden by any one commandment, it either breaks them all, or at least is only accidentally withheld from breaking them. When the selfish man has to deliberate on any course of action, the shape in which it intuitively comes before him is, "How will this affect self?" This is the mainspring of his whole being, the ultimate end of all his actions. It is to him what God is to a Christian.

Precisely so it is with the worldly. When a saint would say to himself, on forming a resolution, "What will be most pleasing to Our LORD?"—when an honest, God-fearing Christian would say, "What is God's law?" a worldly man's first question is, "What does the world allow in this case?" So much has this become a first principle that he tacitly, unconsciously assumes it. It has been incorporated in his being, it is a part of himself. Now, what does the world allow? Everything which is not dishonourable. And what is dishonourable? Nothing which it allows. In other words, it has substituted its own code of morals for the Christian

religion. It has dethroned God, and set itself in His place. It is wonderful how coolly this is done. The world quietly assumes that, of course, it is paramount. The world to come is shelved, and the actual world reigns in its stead. GOD says, "Thou shalt not kill." The world's commandment runs thus, "Thou shalt wash away dishonour in blood." On Sunday men hear that hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of Heaven. On the six days of the week their whole soul is simply engrossed in one single thing, the accumulation of wealth by every possible means that the world permits, without the slightest reference to the law of GOD. In a word, the world, that is, human society, has set up a whole code of morals, at the basis of which lies the assumption that it is the standard of morality, not GOD.

This explains to us many things which are to our purpose. It shows us why worldliness, without being reckoned among positive sins, is so productive of sin. It is the tone of mind caught from the world, and which tacitly assumes that human society is the standard of right and wrong, just as selfishness takes it for granted practically, that self is to be consulted first in all things. The whole point of view is wrong, and if anything at all is right, it is only accidentally. Again, it shows us why the fashionable world is especially, and above all, the world. It is the quintessence of worldly society. There are the model men and women who set the tone in all things, whom others imitate, and among whom they fain would be numbered. There, as in a

high court of appeal, are enshrined and consecrated the maxims of the world. As a tribunal of justice has its unwritten modes of proceeding and its established first principles, controverted by none, and taken for granted by all, so in this great world those axioms prevail which are assumed like the Gospel. We have seen that the first principles of the world are un-Christian and irreligious. The whole tone of conversation is based upon them. There is a spirit in the air which whispers them. A miasma is inhaled from that world which penetrates and imbues the whole being. It gives out from itself an exhalation like the plague. It is morally impossible to avoid it. A man who abhors it may pass through it unscathed, but I defy any one to love it, thoroughly to enjoy it, and to live entirely in it, without being more or less poisoned with its spirit, and thoroughly imbued with its maxims.

We are now able to answer the plea, that it is possible to be in the world and yet not to be of it. It is possible on one condition—that you hate it. There is no subject on which there are so many fallacies, so many ambiguities, as the world. Because the word is used in opposition to the cloister, you fancy that you can live in the world and be unworldly. It is only of the world in that sense that such a possibility can be predicated. But, if by the world you mean the great world, the multitude of men and women who make pleasure their one aim, and who live according to the world's morality, then I deny that you can be thoroughly in it and be unworldly. To follow the same mode of life is to be

of them. Many urge in excuse that their position and even their parents force them into it. Of course, if such be the case, if this life in the midst of the world is quite involuntary, it ceases to be sinful. It is necessary, however, to ask one question. Do you enjoy it? Are you so far engrossed in the pursuits and objects of the world, such as pleasure, admiration, splendid alliances, high society, that they are practically the end of your life? Is God and the sense of duty thrown into the background? Is your existence made up of prayerless days and dissipated nights? If this is the case, then the spirit of the world is upon you, and its poison has already taken effect. It is possible to pass through it unhurt, but not possible for you, for it has hurt you already. As for one who is given up body and soul to pleasure, who spends days and nights in a series of balls, operas, concerts, one whose whole being is wrapped up in all this dissipation, for such an one to pretend to urge the possibility of being unworldly, is a simple absurdity. She is worldly, *ipso facto*. She is worldly simply because she lives in the world and she loves it.

Let us now proceed to the other question. Is it possible for a person to be worldly without losing the grace of God? No one can doubt the possibility for a moment. Let us not, however, deceive ourselves. What have we laid down that worldliness is? We have given various descriptions of it. First, we have seen that worldliness is that state of the soul in which it is so absorbed by an earthly thing, not in itself sinful, that its love for God has either

diminished or else ceased to be paramount. Secondly we have described it to be that state of mind in which the spirit of the world has so sunk into a soul that its standard of morality is the world, not Christianity. These are two ways of looking upon the same idea; and, of course, according to both views, the disease may have only made a partial progress, and may not be deadly. But the essential thing is, to see that it is a disease. To be worldly at all is to be offensive to God in some degree; to be thoroughly worldly is to have lost the grace of God. Worldliness is not an imperfection, it is a state of mind hateful to God, and certainly inducing many sins, and, above all, it is a state of the horror of which we may not be aware.

Let us return for a moment to dry theology, even at the risk of repeating ourselves. Supposing that the soul, by any conscious act, so adheres to a temporal good that it clings to it virtually more than it clings to God, it has ceased to be in a state of grace, even though that temporal good is not itself sinful. In other words, if a man loves some earthly thing to the exclusion of God, so that he is at that moment ready to sin mortally rather than to lose it, then that man is out of God's grace, though he may not have committed any act of sin beyond that act of adherence. Let me quote one or two theologians to make my meaning clearer.* "A venial sin," says Scavini, "may become mortal by

* I am indebted for these quotations to the unpublished pamphlet of a learned and valued friend. Scavini, *De Vitiis*, Disp. 1. cap. 2, art. 3. St Thomas, *Summa*, 2, 2, Quest. 118, art. 4, Quest, 148, art. 2.

reason of the bad disposition of the soul; for instance, supposing a man, doing a thing venially bad or indifferent, is in such a state of mind that he would still do it although it were a mortal sin; for by that evil will he shows that he already prefers that thing to friendship with God." Let us turn now to St Thomas, a far higher authority. "If the love of riches should increase in a man so much as to be preferred to charity, in such a sense that for the love of riches he would not fear to do something against the love of God and his neighbour, then avarice becomes a mortal sin." And still more clearly: "Gluttony may be a mortal sin, if we look upon it with reference to the turning away from our legitimate, ultimate end, involved in its inordinate desire. And this takes place when a man adheres to the pleasures of gluttony as his end, for which he contemns God: that is, if he is prepared to act against the commandments of God in order to obtain such pleasure." In other words, according to the saint's view, the gravity of sin lies in the amount of tenacity with which the will adheres to an object to the prejudice of God. Supposing, then, I only say supposing, a creature appreciates the world more than God, according to the doctrine of St Thomas he has already lost the grace of God, though no other act of sin has occurred, and though he may perhaps be culpably unaware of his state.

Alas! is such a supposition so very wild? How many a virgin soul has Paris corrupted down to the very heart's core? In that Mœnad world there are beings who but lately were school-girls in convents

and who are *Enfants de Marie* still. What has come to them that they look like daughters of Circe rather than children of the pure and holy Virgin? They have done nothing which could dishonour them: but here again let us not deceive ourselves. It is a part of the illusions of the present day to feel secure as long as there has been no great evil of the kind of which the soul feels most horror even in thought. But there are other commandments besides the sixth. There are six other deadly sins, each a source of sin which may be mortal. What is worse in the eyes of God than pride? When the love of admiration and of worship rises to such a point as to make the soul reckless of giving scandal, careless of inflicting pain; when a little absurd being uses her power of body and mind in order to be set up on high as an idol, to be worshipped and adored as a goddess, who will deny that here is vanity to a degree which is monstrous? Add to this a portentous love of ease, cruelty to inferiors, envy, jealousy, and a love of dress, rising to the dignity of a passion; here are sources of sin enough, each sufficient to shut out God. Alas! for poor human nature, that such follies should stand in the place of God; yet such is the experience of every day. When once the soul is entangled in the giddy vortex of the world, it clings with a tenacity to it which is perfectly marvellous, and the result is a character utterly spoiled and a heart thoroughly corrupted.

All this is to be remembered when it is asked whether worldliness is a mortal sin. It is not a mortal sin in the same sense as those which are

treated of in books of moral theology, or in lists of examination of conscience, but it is a tone of mind which, from the absence of God, breaks out into a number of sins which may be mortal or not, according to the degree in which they infect the soul. Nor must we suppose that the Catholic faith will, of itself, physically as it were, neutralize the effect of the world. The very contrary is the case; worldliness has a most peculiar and direct power to neutralize the faith. Every one knows how evil passions may co-exist and remain side by side with the faith without impairing it. It almost seems as though the faith existed in a different sphere in the soul, and that sin was shut off from it and did not hurt it. It is not so in the case of worldliness. It sinks deeper into the heart than direct sin; it seems to soak into the whole being, and to imbue it thoroughly. The whole view of God is dimmed, and He seems to retire far away into some immeasurable distance, so that His presence is far less felt than is the case with a state of tangible sin, where His influence comes sensibly, at least, in the shape of remorse. The rays of His blessed light do not penetrate it; the beams of His love strike coldly on it, and seem to glance aside. The idea of His sovereign authority is especially impaired by it and for the same reason faith in the authority of the Church is almost always shaken.

Thus it is that, apparently by some strange fatality, worldly Catholics who lay claim to piety have ever managed to be the chief support of schisms and all rebellions against the Church. The

reason of this is obvious. The world troubles itself very little about the faith till it appears incarnate before it in the shape of Church-authority. It affects liberality; a worldly man suffers his wife and daughters to think what they please about Transubstantiation, to bow in prayer before a crucifix, and to crown our Lady's image with flowers. But what he will not tolerate is the assumption of jurisdiction by the Church. While, therefore, he can bear the doctrines of the Church, he is frantic at her censures. The world will not suffer that any object on earth should be sacred to anything but itself; and whenever a thing of this world has a double aspect, a temporal and a spiritual, it ignores the latter character, and chooses to contemplate the earthly side alone. It is up in arms when a bishop carries out the laws of the Church with respect to marriage, or refuses to sing a *Te Deum* over its sacrilege. It insists on the dominions of the Holy See being looked upon as a mere temporal kingdom, and sneers at the notion that any part of earth can be holy ground. It is maddened out of its scornful propriety at what it calls the interference of priests with families. It acknowledges no ecclesiastical legislation on the subject of matrimony, and is positively enraged at a vocation.

Such is the world's conduct towards the faith, and the peculiar tendency of the worldly Catholic is to become its tool, and to follow its lead. In all schisms and all revolts against the Church, the world has been able to point to the compliance of Catholics, who had a semblance of piety, as an argu-

ment against the fanaticism of those who have stood firm to the Holy See against it. Worldliness had sapped the foundations of their faith, notwithstanding their frequentation of the Sacraments. Gradually the thought of God's Sovereignty has grown fainter and fainter in their souls, and in the hour of trial they take the side of the world on the first exercise of power on the part of God's representative on earth. They allow themselves to be taken in by the world's distinction between the authority of the Church in matters of belief and of practice, forgetting that she is the appointed guide of our conduct as well as of our faith.

The tendency to schism, then, must be added to the collection of sins of which worldliness is the source; and since society in London is essentially Protestant, the danger of imbibing an heretical turn of mind from constant contact with it must never be forgotten.

We are now in a condition to consider the questions with which we began this discussion, and to ascertain the principles on which Holy Communion is to be allowed to those who live in the midst of the great world.

First of all, worldliness is to be distinctly taken into account in the question, how often may the Holy Communion be granted to a soul? This is a self-evident axiom, yet it is by no means useless to notice it. It is but too often taken for granted that a soul free from grosser sins may be allowed almost unlimited communions. Let us never, however, forget that to be worldly is positively wrong, and

that, except in the rarest instances, to be living in a constant round of pleasure is to be worldly. It does not, therefore, by any means follow that a person, raised by position above the temptation to vice, is necessarily to be permitted to communicate three or four times a week while she is living in dissipation and gaiety. The question is too often treated as though it could simply be reduced to another: Is dancing, or this or that amusement wrong? This seems, however, to mistake the whole point at issue; dancing is no more wrong than any other gymnastic. The real question is, whether a life spent in the pursuit of ease and tumultuous pleasure, is not sure so far to separate the soul from GOD as to render it certain that its communions will be fruitless and indeavour.

Secondly, as we have seen, the characteristic of worldliness, in contradistinction to other states of sin, is that the soul may be to a certain extent comparatively unconscious of it. For this reason there is no repentance, no contrition, no struggle. In its lowest stages, worldliness may be defined to be tranquil acquiescence in venial sin. If there be a state to which is applicable the rule given above for the limit of communions, it is that of the worldly. Frequent communion does them positive mischief, for it tends to keep up in them that combination of utter lukewarmness and perfect self-satisfaction which constitutes their danger and their guilt.

I can only conceive of one objection which can be made to what I have advanced. If what I have

said of worldliness is true, it would follow that a worldly person could not communicate even once a week, nay, could never communicate at all. To this I make a two-fold answer.

1. Worldliness* is a disease which may exist in almost endless degrees and stages. We will suppose its lowest stage, the case of those whom it does not betray into more than venial sins. In this case the objection is not peculiar to the worldly, but applies to all who have an affection to venial sin, and is to be answered in the same way. Weekly communion may be allowed them, on the plea that it preserves them from mortal sin. For the refusal of more frequent communion I can only quote St Alphonso's opinion: "As for those persons," says the saint, "who are not in danger of mortal sin, but who commonly fall into deliberate venial sins, and in whom there is neither amendment nor desire of amendment, it is not right to allow them to communicate more than once a week. It would be well even at times to deprive them of Holy Communion for a whole week, that they may conceive a greater horror of their sins, and a greater respect for the Sacrament." On the other hand, then, the saint allows them communion once a week, in order to keep them from mortal sin; on the other, he expressly forbids them to communicate oftener, and he advises their being deprived from time to time of their weekly communion. We should not forget his last memorable words. O blessed St Alphonso!

* This and the following paragraph to be read in the light of the remarks made p. xiv.

that all who imitate thy kindness to sinners would equally follow thee in thy severity towards the worldly !

Secondly, there are cases where worldliness has become a chronic disease, where the soul is perfectly engrossed with and absorbed in the world, and where God is practically forgotten. In such cases I freely admit I do not see on what principle Holy Communion can be allowed, except as it is given sometimes to sinners of most doubtful repentance, out of sheer compassion, for fear of their being driven altogether from God.

CHAPTER VII. THE LIFE OF THE FREQUENT COMMUNICANT

It is one of the misfortunes of us Catholics in England, that it is difficult for us to keep completely clear of controversy. Even when we are thinking in the silence of our chamber on the dogmas of the Church, insensibly we find ourselves looking upon our holy faith in a controversial point of view, raising up before our minds imaginary adversaries, and asking ourselves what can be said to this or that objection. This, of course, arises in part from our polemical position. We are erecting the second temple; enemies are all round about us; and we keep the weapons of war close by the instruments of building, ready at any given moment to raise our war-cry. We cannot wish it otherwise; yet it must be owned that this state of things has its disadvantages. It breeds in us something of the intellectualism of the age. Is there not in us something of that spirit of universal criticism which characterizes the Englishman of the nineteenth century? We converts, especially, have a rampant judgement, a habit which we have imbibed from infancy of criticizing everything and everybody, and it is hard for us to shake it off. Nothing can be more fatal to the childlike spirit of faith.

Reader, we have suffered from this propensity. There has unavoidably been an unquiet tone of polemics throughout a book, the title of which promised peace. Let us now, however, at the conclusion of our task, forget for awhile that there is such a thing as error upon earth. If there is a place in the

wide world where it is easy to feel like a child, it is at the feet of JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament. We kneel down and gaze at the tabernacle door, happy in the thought that He is there. O Blessed JESUS! if all the philosophers on earth proved it to be impossible, we should still believe without an effort, like a child. It needs no obstinacy and no tenacity: we know that Thou art there.

Blessed JESUS, we have dared to penetrate into the secret recesses of Thy Sacred Heart in Thy Passion! We looked upon it in His agony, broken with disappointed love, and sending forth the Precious Blood at each convulsive throb. We watched it pouring out its gushing streams of mingled blood and water, after it had ceased to beat. Here is a new state, a fresh marvel. Let us wonder and adore. Deign to listen, LORD, while we repeat our Credo at Thy feet.

Credo, I believe. The great Godhead is there. Angels are all around in the silent, lonely church, adoring Thee, while we, Thy sinful creatures, pour out from our poor hearts acts of which they are incapable. With heartfelt joy, we fling at Thy feet all reasoning power, and we use our intellects to frame joyous acts of faith with deep thankfulness, and to say that all things are possible with Thee, and to bow down our whole being before FATHER, SON,^r and HOLY GHOST.

It is a marvellous thought, that Thou art there as Thou art nowhere else except in the Host. Beyond the borders of its little circle, Thou art not as Thou art within it. It is GOD in another shape

and form; our great God over again in a new manifestation of unutterable love; God attendant upon and coming in the train of the Sacred Humanity.

Yes, LORD JESUS, we believe that it is Thou Thyself. After all, this is the one thought which occupies us. As all the mysteries of the Christian religion are gathered up in that little Host, so all the wonders of the Blessed Sacrament are summed up in that one dear thought, JESUS is there. All the sweetness that is contained in that marvellous word, is all there. The SACRED HOST is GOD and Man; it is both together, and each without confusion. There is the Sacred Humanity in very deed. We adore you, blessed Feet, which the Magdalene kissed, and bedewed with tears. Not more literally were they held by her than they are now within a few yards of us. Hail, dear Hands, once dropping blood on Calvary; Arms often thrown around Mary's neck, and stretched upon the cross for our salvation; and thou, beloved Face, beautiful even in the ghastly whiteness of His agony before the bloody sweat came down. The Eyes are there, from whose calm depths of lustrous beauty the soul of the ETERNAL WORD looked forth in love upon the broad earth which He had made, eyes that were filled with human tears, and met other human looks with tenderest pity, and rained down showers of marvellous love even from the cross upon His murderers. Hail, blessed Lips of the ETERNAL WORD, which spoke as never man spoke; blest portals through which the SACRED HEART poured itself out in mysterious voices, which sound still

out of the depths of ages, as living as the moment they were uttered. Ye are silent now, but not with the silence of death. O speak, gracious lips! No Herods are here to ask for miracles out of profane curiosity, but poor children of Thine, to whom one little word from Thee would be the sweetest sound that ever fell on mortal ears.

Yet, dear LORD, that silence of Thine is far more eloquent than words. Thy whole state speaks far more than even Thine own tongue can tell. Voices come out from the tabernacle as we kneel before it, and sink down into the depths of our souls. The SACRED HEART speaks to ours, though the lips are mute. This, at least, loves us, even though all sense were sealed and impervious to us. Even though it were true that every direct avenue from ourselves to the Sacred Humanity were closed, yet messages from us at least reach the Heart. It lives, and its life is love. His human activity is not suspended there, even though it were dormant elsewhere. No veil can hide our presence from His Knowledge. Pour out your whole soul before Him, for He hears, He pities and He loves; or rather listen, for He speaks.

O faithful Heart of JESUS, eighteen hundred years are gone since Thy life on earth, and here we find Thee again, the same and yet how changed! The anguish and the agony have disappeared with the wild flutter of tremulous fear, and the dead weight of blank sadness, the sickness from loss of blood, the physical pain of convulsive throbs, and the last struggle of the strong spirit rending its way in its

agony; all these are over. But in the blessed repose of the present we cannot forget the past. It is still the broken Heart of the Passion. Blessed confidant of all earth's sorrows, millions in each generation since then have knelt before Thee, yet not all the sum of their several griefs can reach to Thine, nor has any sorrow in that countless multitude been unfelt by Thee. O blessed Sacrament, there are few countries in the world where Thou hast not been since then! What woes hast Thou not soothed, for Thou hadst felt them all Thyself before? Thou hast been given to tens of thousands in the catacombs, and hast visited the dungeon of the martyr on the eve of death. Popes have borne Thee on their bosoms in their flight, and exiled confessors in their long flight for the faith have found their only comfort in Thee. Doctors have found light at Thy feet, and unlettered monks have fed upon Thee in the desert. Thou hast been the light of monasteries, and the one joy of holy virgins. O SACRED HOST, St Perpetua dreamt of Thee, St Clare bore Thee in her arms, and Thou didst fly without the aid of human hand to St Catherine of Sienna! But it is not of all this that we think now. It is wonderful enough that any human heart should contain Thee, however saintly; but that Thou shouldst come to sinners such as we, that Thou shouldst give Thyself to the imperfect and the sinful, this is a wonder surpassing all other wonders, and which eternity will not suffice to praise.

We recognize Thee, SACRED HEART, in the Blessed Sacrament. The passion is over, but even in the

deep tranquillity of Thy Eucharistic life, Thou art still the same. Then Thou didst carry all our sorrow and taste the universal woes of earth, and now in the Holy Communion we reap the fruits of Thy universal sympathy. Thou didst suffer and die for all, and even wide as Thy redemption must be the distribution of Thy Blessed Sacrament of Love. Now we understand the words of a dear old saint: "Who could have believed it? God has a want in the midst of the plenitude of His abundance; He longs to be longed for; He is thirsty that men should thirst for Him."* Look at the altar rail; here is God slaking His thirst. Enter into a London chapel on a Sunday morning. It is no high festival, but a common Sunday, when not even the few attempts at magnificence which our poverty permits us are displayed. Let it be in the depths of the city, in an old-fashioned chapel with Protestant pews. Here the church has no beauty that one should desire her. No organ peals, and no sweet-toned choir chants. Yet there is a marvel which kings and prophets thirsted to see and did not see. They throng to the altar; the priest in a low voice repeats the blessed words, and gives to each his God. No saints are there but good ordinary Christians, fearing God in the midst of the world; some are even great sinners who have been just cleansed in the Sacrament of Penance. The same scene goes on all over even this heretical land. No glorious bells ring out over the length and breadth of England, from spire and steeple, to announce the adorable Sacrifice,

* St Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 40.

but in our great wicked towns you may count the communicants by tens of thousands. In Birmingham and Sheffield, Liverpool and Manchester, they are crowding to receive their LORD. The same blessed work is going on in lowly country missions scattered up and down the country, where a few worshippers still congregate to worship the GOD of their fathers, in venerable chapels under the roof of Catholic gentlemen, the descendants of martyrs, where the Blessed Sacrament has found a refuge through centuries of persecution. If such are the scenes enacted in a country which has lost its faith, what shall we say to the countless communions of Catholic France, Italy and Spain? But there are communions all over the earth. In Manchuria and in China, in the backwoods of America, and the coral islands of the Pacific, in Algiers and India, men of every race and colour are receiving the Body of JESUS at the hands of Christian Priests. Each separate communion is a very miracle of love, and each bears witness to the thirst of JESUS for union with His poor creatures.

This has been going on for near two thousand years, and will go on to the day of doom. Whenever you catch a glimpse of the inner life of the Church in times, long gone by, you find yourself in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Who can count the numberless communions since the first Mass was said on the eve of the first Good Friday? All the generations of Christians who are asleep, waiting for the resurrection each in his quiet grave in numberless churchyards all over the earth, or in the

cloisters of ruined monasteries, and shipwrecked men who lie in the depths of the sea, all these have received their LORD over and over again in their lives. The Blessed Sacrament has lain on hearts which were once full of life and joy, and are now cold in the grave. JESUS has soothed the sorrows of these myriads of souls in their lifetime. How many death-beds has He visited since Christianity began? How often has He been carried to the dying in missionary countries, over mountains and moors, over rivers and lonely lakes, across stormy friths and arms of the sea, to Irish cabins or to Highland homes? How often has He been borne on the bosoms of priests, unknown and unrecognized, along crowded streets up into squalid garrets in courts and lanes? Not the stars of Heaven, nor the sand on the sea-shore can outnumber the communions which have taken place from the beginning; and in each, great as may have been the joy of the soul which received Him, yet there was a greater joy in the heart of JESUS at the moment when He united Himself to His poor sinful child.

No bridegroom ever met his bride at the altar with anything resembling the joy with which JESUS, in the Blessed Sacrament, finds Himself a home in a human heart! "Come unto Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Come, ye who work sorrowfully through the livelong day to gain your daily bread. All who toil, whether with hand or brain, Irish labourers and street-sellers, poor sempstresses and factory-girls, come freely to the waters of life. Come, all who bend over

your desks during the weary week, merchants in the city, lawyers from the courts, and students from universities. Life is tumultuous and dissipating: temptations are numberless. The world, the flesh, and the devil are awfully strong; but, be of good cheer, JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament has overcome them all. There will the young man learn to be chaste, the poor to be contented, the man of intellect to be humble. Come, maidens, to preserve your innocence; and mothers, to learn how to love your husbands and your children, for the love of GOD. Come, broken-hearted sinners, here is an antidote for the poison of sin, and a cure for the dreadful habits which well nigh drive you to despair. Come all, and receive the Blessed Sacrament every week,* for so the doctors of the Church tell us all may do who struggle in real earnest to keep out of mortal sin.

But you, above all, restless, weary souls, worn out with battling with imperfections; or rather, wearing out your own life with longing aspirations after holiness, which seem to fly away. Think not that your efforts are in vain. It is something to thirst for GOD. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: for they shall be filled." Be not afraid; your thirst for the Holy Communion is only a faint reflection of the thirst which JESUS feels for union with you. Be not kept back by the sense of your own unworthiness; the fact that you long for the Holy Communion proves that Our LORD intends you to receive Him often. To you

* Daily.—ED.

especially He says: "Come unto Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

It seems to me that unrest and uneasiness is the universal disease of minds in our time; and that the good are not exempt from it. We feel impotent to love God, because the former outlets for the love of God seem to be closed up, and we are all weary and heavy-laden in consequence. In former times a man would have left wife and children, have buckled on his armour, and gone on a crusade to recover the Holy Sepulchre. A lady would have built an abbey, and have lived in it after her husband's death, or dedicated herself to serve the poor in hospitals. There were definite things to be done for God, and men lived and died happy then in the thought of being able to do something to manifest to JESUS their inward love. Now, however, a certain indistinctness has come over our very religion. I often ask myself what would St Elizabeth have done, had she lived now? Had she done in the nineteenth century what she did in the thirteenth, she would have been shut up in a madhouse. Imagine a young duchess like her walking about with a coronet on her head, and on a sudden impulse taking it off, and throwing herself down at the foot of a cross in the square of Wurtzburg, to weep her heart out over the passion of JESUS; or else carrying loaves of bread in her apron to the poor, or tending a leper in her husband's bed. Cribbed, cabined, and confined in all the trammels of modern society, compelled by etiquette never to set her foot on the pavement of London, she would run the risk of

pinning her heart away, from the want of an outlet for the fire burning within her breast. Conceive St Catherine attempting to preach in Trafalgar Square, as she did in the streets of Sienna. The HOLY SPIRIT would doubtless mould and frame her according to the needs of the age; but naturally we cannot imagine what would become of such a being living amongst us.

The consequence of such a state of things is especially felt by many who feel an ardent desire for frequent communion. They cannot bear to feed on the Blessed Sacrament as a mere portion of the luxury of religion. It seems monstrous to partake of the Body and Blood of JESUS so often and to produce no adequate fruit. "What can I do for GOD? I am doing nothing, I am impotent," is their constant cry. On the one hand, it is wrong to break out into irregularities and extravagances, in defiance of the laws of society; on the other, each communion lights up a conscious fire in the heart, which seems to burn away the very life of the recipient without apparently consuming his imperfections. St Bernard's words seem ever ringing in their ears, "How Thou lovest me, my GOD," without St Bernard's power of making a return. "How Thou lovest me, my GOD, and my love. I am never out of Thy thoughts. Thou art ever full of zeal for the salvation of Thy poor, miserable creature."* Thou hast died for me upon the cross, and even Thou dost give me Thine own dear self in the Blessed Sacrament. What shall I render to the LORD for

* In Cant. Sermon. 17.

all that He has done for me? I will receive the cup of salvation, St Perpetua and the martyrs of old would have said, and drink the dregs of the bitter chalice of suffering for the love of JESUS. I will go through the wide world proclaiming Thy dear name, and setting men's hearts on fire with the flame which Thou didst long to kindle, might have answered some great-souled Bernard or Dominic. Hark to the blessed chant of St Elizabeth, a wife, a mother, and a princess: "The kingdom of earth and all the splendour of the world have I trodden under foot for the love of my LORD JESUS CHRIST, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, on whom I have set my heart." But what can we do for Thee, O my LORD? There are doubtless saints on earth now, although we may not know them, and they may come and receive Thee often in Thy Sacrament of Love, but we with our languid hearts and impotent hands, how dare we come near Thee, we who live at home at ease, while the Church is militant and the tents of Israel are in the field? We seem to have no cross to carry, save the dead heavy weight of our own sins and imperfections. Surely he who frequently receives the Body and Blood of JESUS ought to do more for Him than those who seldom come near Him.

Yes, a truer word was never said; frequent communicants should bear fruits in some proportion to this inestimable favour. But nothing will be gained by a sickly languid complaint, or a restless hysterical uneasiness. It is a part of our misfortune that our tendency is ever to fix our inward eye upon

ourselves and upon the state of our souls. Hence a subtle selfishness comes on. Self-contemplation is the disease of us all, and the consequence of it is, that almost all the world grows weary of interior religion and flings itself wildly upon wide public schemes for doing good, upon active committees and associations of benevolence; while others pine their lives away in the sickly sentimentality of disappointed aspirations.

Let us avoid both extremes, and see what sort of life can be led by those who feel impelled by an ardent desire for frequent communion, yet shrink from it on account of the little which they seem to be able to do for GOD. There must be a life below that of a canonized saint, yet above the world. I am not at this moment contemplating the great saints of GOD. They are a class apart, and few were even meant by GOD to reach such heights of glory. The HOLY SPIRIT does not intend all Christians in that sense to be saints. He does not give saintly grace to all. Look at that beautiful ecstasica, with the blood streaming spontaneously and silently from her bleeding brow, and hands, and feet. Who will pretend that all Christian women were ever such even in God's idea? Look at that beautiful vision of Heaven, St Philip gazing on the Host which he has just consecrated, his white face glowing with heavenly light, and his very body floating in mid air, carried upwards by his strong spirit of love. Not every Mass was meant to be like this. Some of us may be saints spoiled in the making. But the generality of Christians were never intended to be

canonized saints at all. We should be mistaking and despising the ordinary ways of God's grace if we thought so. Yet, God forbid that we should be like the world. There are certain unmistakable characteristics which separate a good Christian from the rest of mankind. It was not of saints alone, but of all Christians that Our Lord said that they must take up their cross and follow Him. There must plainly be a certain peculiar character produced by the frequentation of the Sacraments, short indeed of technical sanctity, yet far above the world. It cannot indeed be defined, for a character is something too ethereal to be comprised in a definition; but if I were to attempt to define a good Christian, I should say he was one who was all for God.

It is very hard to describe what is meant by the Christian fear of God. Of course in the world there is no practical recognition whatsoever of the sovereignty of God. But I am not speaking of the world. Some good persons are positively scared by the thought of Him. When first it breaks upon them that they and all they possess, their children and all they hold dearest, are literally in the hands of an absolute, irresponsible God,* who can with perfect justice do what He wills with them, there comes a revulsion upon their souls. This often takes place with converts. The self-satisfied Pharisaism of their

* God is answerable to no one for His acts; but this does not mean that He makes any arbitrary use of His absolute sovereignty. He must act in accordance with His infinite perfections, His wisdom, goodness, etc. "But Thou, being master of power, judgest with tranquillity; and with great favour disposest of us." Wis. xii, 18.—ED.

former condition, when God is often practically null, then gives place to a sort of normal state of querulous discontent. His sovereignty lies like a dismal shadow on their souls. They sit uneasily as yet under all the tremendous realities of eternity. They are unaccustomed as yet to the character of God which these reveal. This irrational fright, however, is not Christian fear. There is a beautiful tranquillity in a good Christian's quiet recognition of the fact that God is absolute. How wonderfully this thought of God covers in their mind all the relations of life? There is nothing outside God for them. There is a touching simplicity in the way in which, with perfect naturalness, without any drawback or reservation, without insincerity, yet without loud profession, they wish to know the will of God. There is no awkward reserve about them; you can see down into the depths of their souls; they are clear and limpid as a pure stream before God, and all that is God's. The stream spreads out its bosom and tranquilly mirrors heaven only, and so do they. And this distinguishes them from the others whom I have described. It is so much a first principle with them that God can do what He wills, that it has become a second nature to them. They fear Him because He is God, but there is no shyness or timidity, no cowardice in their fear. Above all, the thought of offending Him deliberately never enters into their minds. He is God, and such is His law. They may sin from hastiness, from temper, from a thousand imperfections; but deliberately, God forbid. The chaste, blessed law of God follows them everywhere.

It enters into their choice of a state of life; it rules supreme over the disposal of their children. Not only, however, do they obey cheerfully and absolutely God's positive law, but by a sort of perfectly unconscious aim at perfection, they instinctively always consider what will please God best. The notion of a creature not doing what his CREATOR wishes, even in cases where there is no definite obligation, appears to them irrational and absurd. Thus, in all their conduct, self is nothing, God is everything. They act as if they had no personal interest in anything. Rank, wealth, children, were not given for their pleasure, to be appanages of self, but to be used solely for God.

I need not point out here how this tranquil fear implies love. It is physically impossible for beings constituted as we are thus to throw ourselves into the arms of one who does not love us intensely. We could not abandon ourselves implicitly to a cruel tyrant. It is because God is Infinite Goodness that our confidence in Him is so unbounded, that unhesitatingly we place our entire trust in one whose justice is so awful, whose claims are so absolute. There is a most joyful feeling in perfect repose upon the Infinite. We are raised above the stifling prison feeling of earth, and breathe freely when we have found an object on whom we can rest without let or hindrance. The very absoluteness of God is a relief to us. Our little nature can plunge into that dread immensity, secure of finding itself caught and upborne on the wings of boundless love. For this reason it is that our ideal Christian trusts God

against all appearances. In the midst of the perplexing ways of GOD's dealing with him, his faith never fails. Others, whose fear is slavish, dread GOD as though He might be expected at any moment to circumvent them, and in the midst of actual trials are ever querulous and complaining. Far different is a Christian's loyal feeling. "Though He kill me, yet will I trust Him." GOD's ways may be mysterious, but they are far more sure of His love than they can be of anything else in the world, and their love only becomes more pure and more intense in the fiery furnace of trial.

I need not say that such Christians are unworldly. When such tremendous interests are at stake, earthly things become immediately valueless. Rank, wealth, honour, grow very pale before the full light of GOD, Heaven, and Hell. Worldly pleasures weigh nothing in comparison with Holy Communion or a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. There is nothing in them of the absorption, the terrible tenacity with which the world is bent on its interests. Instead of the frantic and cruel opposition which worldly Catholics throw in the way of vocations, they think it an honour to have a priest or a religious among their children. They prefer a profession to a brilliant marriage. This unworldliness throws a blessed aureole of sanctity over all their earthly relations. There is no self in the love over which GOD presides. Children are loved intensely as precious gifts from GOD, and, therefore, there is no weakness or over-indulgence in their education. Husbands and wives love each other far more intensely than can be when

God is absent, yet their love is without idolatry. Indifference is certainly by no means a virtue in married Christians, because their love for each other is the result of a sacrament, and the more perfect they grow, the greater is their love. No fear of loving each other too well, as long as God is loved more than all.

After all, the basis of the character is love. inseparable indeed from holy fear, yet still intense love for God, flowing out without sentiment, without profession, in a thousand ways spontaneously upon all that God loves. This is the proper legitimate effect of the Holy Communion—its sacramental grace. The Heart of JESUS comes close to the human heart, and infuses into it all its loves.

First, it brings with it a strange love of solitude. JESUS loved the lonely mountain and the desert, and a desire for solitary prayer is generally the result of frequent communion. I by no means forget the married life of St Jane Frances de Chantal, and the remark of the servants, that as soon as she quitted her old director for St Francis of Sales, her devotions were so managed as to incommode no one. A married woman and a mother cannot live like a Carmelite; nevertheless, after all, God must have His hours; there must be time for mental prayer; the Blessed Sacrament must be adored and visited.

A love of lonely prayer is a very useful effect of frequent communion, as well as an index of fitness for it. Mystical tendencies are far more common in the Christian heart than is supposed. I am not

speaking of supernatural prayer; but there is many a step between the very lowest kind of prayer of quiet and common meditation. Many a soul has been stunted and thwarted in spiritual growth from a want of encouragement in prayer. It is but too often taken for granted that those who are living in the world are unfit for anything but vocal prayer, or for anything above the driest meditation. Let the free heart pour itself out before God. Tell Him of all your sorrows and your wants, and especially how much you long to love Him, and your deep contrition for your sins. If you have but a short time to spare, give it to Him without prelude or method. "Of all ways of praying, that is the best for us to which we are the most drawn, at which we succeed best, and from which we derive most profit," says an old Jesuit writer. The heart which has really turned to God will not long require to call upon the imagination for compositions of place, or to draw on the intellect for proofs of truths which are its life. Be not afraid; you will find no lack of things to say to God. Adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, confidence, love, all these can alternate with petitions for all wants, spiritual or even temporal. We should, except in particular cases, be inclined to suspect any desire for frequent communion, where a desire for prayer is absent. It is for want of it there is so much bustle, portentous activity, love of publicity, and littleness in the religious world. Nothing can make up for the habitual want of mental prayer. The offering up of our actions to God at the moment of doing them is not to be

neglected, but it is not worth one half hour of continuous intercourse with JESUS in solitude.

I need not say that the result of this intercourse with Our LORD is the unconscious adoption of all sorts of supernatural principles and lines of conduct. As the world has its maxims and its way of acting, so also has Christianity. Many a man has been all his life an indifferent Christian, because, though he has the faith of the Church, he still clings to national and heretical views, feelings, and modes of action. On the contrary, those who grow in grace, regularly, as though by a secret concert, adopt certain views which, intellectually, may be called supernatural principles, and which in reality are instinctive feelings caught from the heart of JESUS.

First and foremost of these is the love of the poor. I am not speaking of mere benevolence. The Christian feeling towards the poor is something hard to describe. It is neither simple compassion, nor is it a sense of duty. There are few who do not feel pity akin to pain at hearing of suffering. There are many who know that almsgiving is a duty. But I can call a Christian's feeling for the poor by no other name than love. The strange extravagances of the saints, their love for the sores and wounds of the poor, arise from a sort of ecstasy of love, caught from the heart of JESUS. For this reason the almsgiving of a real Christian is noble, generous, lavish, and uncalculating. Though it is a real supernatural prudence, yet the world would call it improvident. GOD blesses the great houses where generous almsgiving is hereditary. After all, here is the great

mark of unworldliness, the practical test of love for the poor. At the same time that alms are given regally, they are also bestowed with courtesy and with a kind of reverence. True Christians have a feeling for the poor, which can only be called respect. They do not dragoon them, or legislate for them, but consult their feelings, their habits, their very caprices.

Need I say that another love of the Heart of JESUS, the love for sinners, is fully shared by the good Christian? There is always something of an apostle in him. How strange it is that the purest souls are ever the most tender towards sinners? There is a profound Pharisaism in the worldly heart when its virtue is only natural. How different is the lesson learned from the wounded Heart of JESUS by those who receive Him often in the Sacrament of His Love? He bids them try to save sinners at any price. True, they are corrupt to the very heart's core, ungrateful, deceitful, horrible to behold. But in the mind of a Christian all the natural disgust and repugnance is swallowed up in a profound pity for their unutterable degradation, their state of desperate foulness. Are they not immortal souls? Did not JESUS die for them? They are sinking down and down in deeper depths of unspeakable abomination, which can only end in hell. Hence, horror in a Christian soul gives way before fright at their dreadful danger. Hence, when JESUS touches the heart, all the feeling which bids the sinners stand off, which thanks God that he is not as that Publican, disappears, and gives place to pitying love. The purest

and the most holy souls surround miserable sinners with the most pathetic anxiety. The thought that JESUS is so terribly dishonoured is to them intolerable; and whenever they hear of a sinner, of whatever kind, they cannot rest till by prayer, or alms, or personal exertion, they have compassed his conversion, and thus repaired the honour of Our LORD and saved his soul. It is an epoch in the life of a Christian when this feeling dawns upon his soul. It is a proof of increasing union with GOD. It shows that prayer is doing its work, that the Holy Communion is transforming him to the image of JESUS. The kindling of this apostolic flame can only be a spark from the burning love of the Sacred Heart.

Another love caught from the Blessed Sacrament is the love of the Church. However the world may manage to complicate questions in its contests with the Church, there is a sure instinct in real piety which makes it see clearly which is the right side. This is a tremendous touchstone of true religion. What can I do for GOD? you ask me. There is as much, perhaps more, to be done for Him in this generation as in the time when men assumed the cross to rescue the Holy Sepulchre. Be loyal to the Holy See in the day when its children are falling from it. Rise above national prejudice and insular feelings. Have the manliness to stand up for GOD's cause when so many are caught by dreams of false liberality. Let there be no miserable compromise with heresy, no desire to stand well with the Protestant world. I have said that there was a marked difference between Christians such as I am describ-

ing and saints fit for canonization. Here, however, the difference seems to melt away, and ordinary Christians in times of danger rise up before us with the stature and proportions of saints. There is a kind of character to be traced among English Catholics in ecclesiastical history, the precise parallel to which, if I am not mistaken, can hardly be seen elsewhere. There is a certain uprightness and reality which, ordinarily speaking, without much outward pretension to sanctity, in time of trial comes out in unexpected grandeur, and especially distinguishes itself by a valiant defence of those doctrines which have a direct reference to the Church. Such was our great St Thomas of Canterbury; such too was our cardinal-martyr Fisher. I need hardly point to Sir Thomas More, once threatening to be but a British edition of Erasmus,* yet all at once vigorously casting off the prejudices of an English lawyer, and exchanging his unstained ermine for a martyr's robe. Look again at plain Mistress Clitheroe of York, a wife and a mother, yet, suddenly, out of an honest English housewife, starting up as a martyr, and crushed to death like a blessed flower which gives out its hidden perfumes as it is trodden under foot. Of the same stamp was Philip Howard, he by whose side has just been laid at Arundel one never to be forgotten, who resembled him in his noble singleness of purpose and beautiful simplicity. The days of martyrdom perhaps are gone, but there is no

* This seems to refer to More's well-known friendship with Erasmus, and should not be taken in any disparaging sense. "His was a beautiful life from first to last." *Lives of the English Martyrs*, Quarterly Series, vol. I, 124.—ED.

lack of work to be done for GOD. We can be the representatives of all high and holy principles in the midst of an unbelieving generation. Without pomp or pretension, from the simple fact of our holding Catholic principles and acting upon them, we can protest against the miserable liberalism of many who lend their honoured names to swell the cry against the Church of GOD. We will not, under pretence of fearing to scandalize Protestants, shrink from putting forward doctrines which peculiarly shock them, such as, the exclusiveness of salvation and the jurisdiction of the Church. The heart that aspires heavenwards tramples all human respect under foot, and fears not to assert principles which shock the national prejudices, or the politics of the day. Our love for JESUS will make us feel like a wound any attack upon His Vicar, even in His capacity of sovereign. GOD forbid that we should be feeding on the sacraments of the Church, kneeling at her altars, and enjoying her ineffable consolations, and yet refuse to bear her opprobrium with her, or be indifferent to the insults heaped upon her head. Our instincts will ever teach us that we must rally round St Peter's chair, for there alone can we be sure of acting right amidst the confusion and tumult of the day. He who loves JESUS cannot help loving the shepherd whom JESUS has set to feed His sheep in His absence. The love of Rome is a saintly instinct, coming direct from the Sacred Heart of JESUS.

There is a work then to be done for GOD on the earth. The powers of evil are abroad; this is their

hour, let us take God's side boldly, uncompromisingly. But, above all, there is work to be done for God in our own souls. We might be far better than we are. Our heart is a battlefield as well as the world. There are three powers there fighting for the mastery, the spirit of evil, the human spirit, and the SPIRIT of God. Watch your own thoughts and the movements of your own soul; you will find that each one comes from one of these three sources—God, the devil, or yourself. Now, the spiritual life consists in the prevalence of the HOLY GHOST over His miserable rivals. Pride and haughtiness, sensibility to slights and insults real or fancied, unkindness and harsh judgements, want of considerateness for servants and dependants, anger and hastiness in giving reproofs, all these are perpetually rising up in our hearts, and are to be put down. Quick emotions are ever agitating and unmanning us. Here, then, is work enough for us to do. Say not; We have tried so long that we are out of heart. Because efforts have failed, it does not follow that we should not renew them. Let us fight on, without expecting any result from ourselves, but only through the might of JESUS. Here must be the work of the Blessed Sacrament. Receive JESUS frequently. He will calm these troubled waves and give you peace. The fire from His Sacred Heart, coming so close to yours, will burn up these impurities, and inflame it with heavenly love. His Blessed Spirit will take possession of your body and soul, till you will no longer think your own thoughts, or be at the mercy of your own feelings, but see all things with

His eyes, and feel with His Heart instead of your own. He longs for this Himself; "with desire He desires" to unite Himself to you in the Holy Communion.

To us priests it belongs to satisfy this desire of JESUS. To us He has entrusted this most blessed power of distributing the Blessed Sacrament. GOD and His Church leave it to us to estimate the frequency with which each soul should receive the Holy Communion. No rule is laid down, but it is left absolutely* to each of us in the tribunal of penance. This is a great responsibility. According to the idea which each of us has in his mind, the Bread of Life is distributed to the faithful. It is the highest and most important part of direction. The sanctity of each soul may be said to turn upon it. Let us not act at random, but on principle. Above all, let us lean to the side of frequency. There are many souls who ought to communicate frequently, and do not do so, because they have wrong views upon this all-important subject. There are thousands of souls who might communicate weekly, and do not. There are many sinners who could be reformed if they were encouraged to communicate more often. Let us hasten to satisfy this thirst of the Heart of JESUS, and continually preach frequent communion.

We end, as we began, with Thee, dear LORD. Oh come, LORD JESUS. Here is work for the Sacrament of Thy love. Our hearts are weary and heavy laden,

* The role of the Confessor has been altered by the Decree. See p. xiii.

O come and refresh them ! We have ceased to have any hope in ourselves ; but, notwithstanding all sins and imperfections, one thing burns within us still undiminished, a thirst for the Blessed Sacrament.

“ As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O GOD. My soul thirsteth after the strong living GOD ; when shall I come and appear before the face of GOD ? My tears have been my meat day and night, whilst it is said to me daily, Where is thy GOD ? These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me : for I shall go ever into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of GOD. Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me ? Hope in GOD, for I will yet praise Him, the salvation of my countenance and my GOD.”

APPENDIX

NOTE A, p. 32.—ON THE SCHOLASTIC IDEA OF SPACE.

THE views on the subject of space held by St Thomas can only be gathered from different parts of his writings, and I will endeavour to collect a sufficient number of passages to justify what I have said concerning them.

Space is co-extensive with creation. Summa 1, qu. 46, art. 1, ad. 4, and 8.

Properly speaking, space has reference to bodies. The definition of “locus” is “terminus corporis continentis.” Opusc. 52.

Nevertheless, spiritual substances are also subject to space, but in a different way from bodies,—i, qu. 8, art. 2, ad. 1, where St Thomas modifies the old axiom, “Incorporalia non sunt in loco.”

Angels are in a manner in space. Summa 1, qu. 52, art. 1, 2, 3.

Angels were created in the empyrean heaven. Qu. 61, art. 4.

Our LORD’S Body is not in the Blessed Sacrament sicut in loco. 3 qu. 76, art. 5.

Nevertheless it is by accident subject to the laws of space, not in itself, but as connected with the species. Art. 6.

The following passage from a learned German work on St Thomas will be found to be a good résumé of his views on space;

“Our power of making space an object of thought has its origin in the perception that the

same place is occupied successively by different bodies. Thus the movement of bodies and their change of place lead us to the concept of space. Although, however, it is not the same with bodies, yet its existence depends on that of bodies. It is the circumference of the corporeal things which it contains. Above all, there is no such thing as a vacuum, either within or without the corporeal world. Just as little is there infinite space. There is no space outside the corporeal world; and that world is necessarily finite and circumscribed. In its very idea each body is limited, and an infinite number of such bodies is inconceivable, since there is no such thing as infinite multitude. . . . Immaterial substances, as such, are not contained by space, rather they contain the place in which they are, and where they operate; in this way the soul contains the body, the angels contain the corporeal thing on which they work, and God contains all things. Souls and angels are limited by their presence and operation to a determinate place; God, however, is simply above all space. As the soul is in its wholeness in each part of the body, so God also is wholly in each part of the universe; not, however, in the same way as the soul. The soul is in all parts of the body as its essence; but God is in all parts of the universe as the cause of their being. The soul is bound to the place in the body, because it is the essence of the body. The angel cannot be in many places at once, but, like the soul, can only be in one determinate place, though it is there by its operation, not by its essence. If, therefore, an angel wishes to go from one

place to another, he must move, though he is not obliged to move through all the intermediate space. Werner, "Der Heilige Thomas von Aquino." Band. 2, p. 265.

It is evident from this passage how very different are the points of view from which the Schoolmen and modern writers severally regarded space. It may be truly said that the Schoolmen held at once the reality of place and the non-reality of space. The truth of this observation will be made more evident from a comparison of the following passages of De Lugo. De Sacr. Euch. Disp. v, sect. 4. "Nomine loci videtur intelligi superficies realis corporalis circumdantis, non tamen secundum se solum, sed prout immobilis, hoc, est prout affixa tali spatio imaginario." A little further on, "spatium reale," is used as the equivalent of "locus"; while sect. 5, num. 123, he seems to say that spatium as distinguished from locus "non est aliquid reale."

NOTE B, p. 35.—ON CERTAIN SCHOLASTIC TERMS.

In order to make the doctrine of St Thomas intelligible to my readers, I have been obliged to use terms which, as far as I know, are not used by him or the earlier Schoolmen. It may be useful for students of theology to give a short account of their views, and to explain their phraseology.

I begin by saying that all theologians universally assert most strongly that the Body of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is unextended. I shall give some quotations from very various schools to make this clear. Billuart, after saying that the quantity of

Our LORD's Body is all in the Host, adds: *Quantitas autem CHRISTI non est extensa ad locum nec illi commensurata*. Diss. 4, art. 2, In. San Euch.

De Lugo.—In Sac. Euch. Diss. 5, sect. 1, Licet CHRISTUS DOMINUS in cœlo habet extensionem quantitativam, in Eucharistia tamen habet alium modum essendi et ideo collocatur simul in pluribus altaribus quod *adversus hæreticos* probatur.

Frassen, *Philosophia Academica* (a Scotist writer)—Negari non potest absque ingenti temeritate Corpus CHRISTI in Eucharistia habere veram quantitatem continuam et permanentem, alias non diceretur corpus humanum et organicum. Certum tamen est illam quantitatem ibi esse sine actuali extensione locali, nam ut *fide constat* CHRISTI DOMINI Corpus est totum in toto loco Hostiæ consecratæ et totum in qualibet ejus minima parte.

These writers evidently consider the non-extension of Our LORD's Body to be theologically certain and all but of faith.

Let us now see how St Thomas expresses the same truth. It is evident that he means that Our LORD's Body is non-extended, when he says that it is in the Blessed Sacrament per modum substantiæ. This is plain from the fact that the above-mentioned writers mean by the extension of a body its having parts *locally* outside one another. Now this is precisely what St Thomas denies of Our LORD's Body when he says that it is "modo substantivo," *v.* for instance, iii, qu. 76, art. 4 and 5. He there says it is "totum in toto, et totum in qualibet parte," and he then denies that it is in itself under the common

laws of locality, though in each Host it is fixed to the place formerly occupied by the bread, or as he expresses it, still filled with the quantity of the species. He founds this view upon his idea of substance. According to his view, substance stripped of quantity is independent of place, indivisible, the object of mind alone. He even speaks of it almost as if it were immaterial. Upon this substance, dividing it into parts, organizing it and giving it a local habitation, comes the category of quantity, never without a miracle separated from it, yet separable in idea, and, therefore, capable of separation by the power of God.

This conception of the functions and office of quantity will explain other difficulties in the phraseology of Saint Thomas. In the place which I have quoted above, he says that the whole quantity of Our LORD's Body is in the Blessed Sacrament. He means that it is there, undiminished, with all its parts, and above all, it is there, with all its organization. He adds, however, that it is not there *modo quantitativo*, "after the usual manner of quantity." In other words, it is not, properly speaking, there locally, for, according to the ordinary laws of locality, it could be nowhere else, whilst in the Blessed Sacrament, though localized through the accidents in each Host, it is also in thousands of Hosts besides. And if it be asked, how, if quantity is there, is it possible that extension, which is its effect, should be absent, he answers, that extension is but the secondary effect of quantity, and can, therefore, be impeded by the power of God as long as its

primary result—viz., the division into parts, is preserved.

In the latter Schoolmen, when the use of the word “*extensio*” became common, this would be otherwise expressed. With them, the word has a much wider signification than in modern philosophy. With us extension is exclusively local, and is equivalent to empiric space. They, however, divided “*extensio*” into two kinds; besides “*extensio in ordine ad locum*” (which is modern extension), they also say that there is in a body “*extensio in ordine ad se*,” which is St Thomas’s “*quantitas*,” and would by us be called organization: *vide* Frassen ubi sup. In other words, they lay down the doctrine which I have tried to describe in my fourth chapter, that organization can subsist without extension.

It only remains for me to quote passages from an accredited commentator on St Thomas to support my view of his meaning. John of St Thomas, a Dominican, has these words on the formal idea of quantity:

“*Formalis ratio quantitatis non potest consistere primario et per se in actuale repletionem loci aut quacumque actuali extensione in ordine ad locum, constat enim ex mysteriis fidei sine istis affectionibus quantitatem inveniri; est enim Corpus CHRISTI in Eucharistia cum sua quantitate, sicut et cum reliquis accidentibus ut probat St Thomas, iii, qu. 76, 4. Et tamen ibi non est modo divisibili nec modo mensurabili in ordine ad locum divisibiliter.*”—Cursus Philosophicus, sect. 16, art. 1.

On substance, he says: “*Sublata quantitate sub-*

stantia careret omnibus punctis et consequenter omni unitivo partium per modum extensionis quia ut bene advertit, D. Thomas in 9, dist. 30, qu. 1: substantia sine quantitate non est indivisibilis per reductionem partium ad punctum sed per carentiam omnis divisibilitatis. Unde non esset in illa substantia omnis motus sicut nec locus physicus sed solum esset in universo tanquam pars illius, non ut locatum in loco, omnes enim istæ imaginationes tollendæ sunt, quia sequuntur quantitatem ut locatam. Quare illa substantia non est distans nec alicubi positive, sed locum habet existentium sine loco, sicut res extra mundum et angelus non operans." He adds afterwards the very strong statement: "Nec tamen sequitur quod illa entitas redditur spiritualis quia manet cum capacitate quantitatis quam non habet spiritus; habet tamen *modum quendam spiritualitatis*, sicut Corpus CHRISTI in Sacramento." It is impossible to read such passages without being struck with the resemblance of the views of St Thomas in substance to those of such modern philosophers as consider substance to be unextended force. Their method is perfectly different. Their fundamental conception of matter is different. So far from looking upon matter as a substance with a collection of extraneous accidents adhering to it, modern writers now look upon it as the permanent cause out of which the qualities and phenomena proceed. Nevertheless, notwithstanding all these differences, there is a great resemblance in the fundamental idea of the ultimate non-extension of matter. In comparing scholastic to

modern philosophy our first impulse is to say that they are perfectly different. A more intimate acquaintance with them leads to the conclusion that they are, after all, not so dissimilar. Modern philosophy, as far as it is true, is rather a formula imperfectly expressing a truth which we only partially see; and scholastic philosophy is another formula and another method, sometimes less clear and less convenient than the modern, and yet perfectly capable of expressing truth. If we only choose to master its phraseology, and to throw ourselves into its modes of thought, we shall have a higher opinion of it, the more we study it. We shall be the more convinced that, in some shape or other, it treats of all the questions of our own day, though they are often less neatly stated by the Schoolmen, and that its fundamental ideas are such as never have passed away, and never can be destroyed. Above all, we shall see that the very terms which are consecrated by theology, such as substance, person, accident, have still a perfectly intelligible meaning, even to men of this generation, if only they honestly apply their minds to master them.

NOTE C, p. 40.—ON THE PHILOSOPHY
OF ST THOMAS.

In order to justify what is here said of the scholastic axiom, "*Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit prius in sensu*," it will be necessary to give a brief account of its bearings on the philosophy of the Schoolmen, and of the use which they made of it; and here, as elsewhere, I will take St Thomas as

their representative, without forgetting in the least that there were other schools of philosophy in the Middle Ages, authorized by the Church as well as the Dominican.

First, how comes it that St Thomas was led to lay so much stress on the axiom in question? We must remember the saint's historical position. When we wonder at the stupendous edifice of the *Summa*, and gaze at the splendid whole, we must not forget that, like all other great books, it had as it were a private history. It was written for a particular purpose, and was the result of an anxious combat with particular opinions. The doctrines of Averrhoes had even infected the Christian schools. The peculiar heresy opposed by St Thomas was a definite Pantheism, which taught that all men had but one intellect, and which did not shrink from following out this doctrine into its legitimate conclusion, the denial of personality and of the moral responsibility of the individual. This is the key to much which would otherwise be inexplicable in St Thomas. The great question which occupies him is the principle of individuation. Why is each human soul one, and what constitutes its individuality is the central question of his system. Hence his insisting on the doctrine, that the soul is the form of the body. Hence his view, that the matter individuates the form. His opponents did not deny that bodies were separate and distinct. If, then, the saint argues, each man has a separate body, it also follows from these principles that he has a separate soul. The souls which are the forms of these several

bodies must also be distinct individuals. Hence also the prominent place given by St Thomas to all doctrines which illustrate the intimate union between body and soul. Hence his anxiety to show how the action of the senses is a condition to the operations of the human intellect.

Secondly, another reason why St Thomas insisted so much on the action of the senses in the operations of the intellect was in order to secure the objectiveness of human knowledge. Since his doctrine of conceptualism consists in holding that genera and species are concepts, that is, representations formed by the intellect, it was necessary to prove that they were at least in some sense similitudes of the outer world, in order to secure our knowing anything whatsoever of objects outside our minds. Truth, according to his definition, is the conformity of the intellect to its objects; and this is effected by the intellect forming to itself a similitude of the thing which it contemplates. In order, however, to enable the mind to frame this resemblance, the likeness of the thing must previously have been impressed on the sense. Evidently the accuracy of the likeness depends upon the fidelity of this first impression, and for this reason the sense is considered by him to be a passive faculty, determined by the sensible object.* The eye perceives colour, because the image of the colour, which colour exists only in the object, is impressed upon it; and if the intellect is to frame to itself an accurate idea of the colour, it must have received

* Summa, i, 71, 3, ad. 1; i, 85, 2, ad. 2.

the image faithfully from the sense and from the phantasia. Hence the anxiety of St Thomas to connect the intellect as closely as possible with the faithful copy, impressed by the object on the sense. It is in order to obtain a firm standpoint for the ideas of the mind, which would otherwise be arbitrary fictions. He was perfectly aware that the mind colours the object after its own fashion, and that all that is the object of the cognition of a being can only be conceived according to the nature of the intellect of that being.* He knew that the similitude in the immaterial intellect cannot be the image of the matter of the object, but only of its form; it was the more necessary, therefore, that, at least, the sensible image should be accurate, in order that the same intellect should be able to correct its idea according to the phantasm which it derives from sense.

I do not think, therefore, that it can be denied that St Thomas, for these reasons, assigned to the senses a greater part in the work of the intellect than many other Catholic philosophers, that he laid a greater stress on the necessity of a perpetual recourse to the phantasma, even when the idea was framed, and that intuition plays a less part in the operations of the mind in his system than, for instance, in that of St Bonaventure.

Is this, however, the whole of St Thomas's doctrine? Is he simply a medieval Locke? Does he hold that we have no knowledge of any truth except through data derived from the senses? Conse-

* Summa, i. 85, ad. 1.

quently that we have no immediate knowledge, no intuition of anything but the objects of sense? Does he refer all our knowledge to experience, and consequently shut out the possibility of necessary truth? I think it can clearly be made out that St Thomas held that the human mind has an intuitive faculty, that it possesses intuitions in the wider sense of the term, that is, native convictions of truths not derived from abstraction, nor obtained by inference, "original perceptions looking immediately upon the object *or truth*."*

The Schoolmen were perfectly aware of the tendency to idealism inherent in the doctrine of representative ideas. The question often presented itself to St Thomas, whether the intellect was not in error, and consequently whether the views which it presents to us may not be altogether false. Scotus says still more explicitly, "*quomodo habetur certitudo eorum quæ subsunt actibus sensuum puta quod aliquid extra re vera est album quale videtur et calidum, prout sentitur.*" Scotus ap. Montefortino, *Summa*, tom. ii, p. 1, qu. 84. Hence arose Scotus's realistic reaction against St Thomas, whilst in the next century Ockham's† counter-action actually drew from St Thomas's doctrine the conclusion that truth is not the conformity of the mind to an object, but the logical coherence of ideas with a mere arbitrary relation to the object. Without, however, pursuing further the history of

* M'Cosh, "Intuitions of the Mind," p. 26.

† What I have said in the text on the realism of the Nominalists only applies to the early school, not to that of Durandus or Ockham.

the controversy, let us see what, according to St Thomas, is our warrant for believing that the idea which our mind abstracts from the objects of sense as conveyed by the phantasma really represents those objects. He answers that, in the process of abstracting the idea from the species impressa or phantasma, the mind is guided by certain intuitions, as they would now be called. In several places of his works he says that the intellectus agens possesses not from experience, nor from reasoning, but in its original constitution, certain principles by which it recognizes the form wrapped up in phantasmata. For instance, in his treatise *De Mente*, he says, “*Ipsa anima in se similitudines rerum format, in quantum per lumen intellectus agentis efficiuntur formæ a sensibilibus abstractæ intelligibiles actu ut in intellectu recipi possint. Et sic etiam in lumine intellectus agentis nobis quodammodo omnis scientia originaliter indita, mediantibus universalibus conceptionibus quæ statim lumine intellectus agentis cognoscuntur per quas sicut per universalia principia judicamus de aliis et ea præcognoscimus in ipsis.*” *De Mente*. In the same place he speaks of “*Principia quorum cognitio est nobis innata.*” The same truth is most strikingly expressed in various passages of the *Summa*, where this intelligence of first principles is said to be non-inferential and immediate—i, qu. 58, art. 3; qu. 64, art. 2, where the human intellect is in that respect paralleled with that of the angels. *Vide* also *Summa*, 1a 2ae, qu. 8, art. 1. Nay, in a most remarkable passage, 1a 2ae, qu. 180, art. 6, ad. 2, the very word

intuition is used of the knowledge of first principles and it is compared to mystical contemplation. *Vide* also i, qu. 79, 12, where it is said that "the unchangeable laws of morals are known by us without reasoning through "*principia nobis naturaliter indita*," for which we have a special habit, called *synderesis*. It is evident that these are true intuitions and not simply cases in which, by analysis, we see immediately a predicate involved in a subject.

So palpable is it that what St Thomas calls "*intellectus*" is a storehouse of a priori principles existing in the mind prior to experience, that a plausible parallel has more than once been drawn between the doctrine of St Thomas and that of Kant.* In both there is the union of matter and form in the concept. Kant's "*Verstand*" may easily be compared to the "*intellectus agens*," and the saint's "*principia naturaliter indita*" resemble the a priori concepts and principles of the pure understanding. There are, however, very great differences.

1. In Kant the form of our knowledge is entirely furnished by the mind. In St Thomas the form is the similitude of the form of the object, and abstracted from the phantasmata. Nor is there any inconsistency in this, for it must be remembered that with the Schoolmen the form of the object is immaterial—iii, qu. 75, 6.

2. In Kant the cognition is a modification of the mind. In St Thomas the species *intelligibilis*, or

* *Vide* Balmes, ap. Werner, 3, 638.

rather the *verbum mentis*, which expresses it, is a *tertium quid* between the mind and the object, a similitude of the object, framed by the mind to represent the object, and emanating from the intellect.

3. In St Thomas the action of GOD on the soul is never forgotten. Even in the natural order our souls are perpetually under the influence of GOD's operation, and those intuitions come directly from Him. Though their truth is self-evident, and though, if I may use the expression, they are self-luminous, yet, as in material light we can inquire into the cause of its luminousness, so with respect to those native convictions of the mind, we may inquire whence they are derived; and, according to St Thomas, these illuminations which light up the soul come from GOD. "*Prima principia quorum cognitio est nobis innata sunt quædam similitudines veritatis æternæ, unde secundum quod per eas de aliis judicamus, dicimur judicare de rebus per rationes immutabiles vel veritatem increatam.*" It is from GOD and from GOD alone that they derive their immutableness and eternity, or as we should now say, their necessity. I might say much more on this subject. I might go on to point out the bearing of St Thomas's doctrine on the transcendental conception of GOD ("*Die Platonische transcendenz der Dominicanschulen,*" as Werner calls it), or of his views on the Divine ideas. I have, however, said enough to show what injustice is done to this great saint, by looking exclusively to one part of his doctrine. With all the defects in his psychology,

notwithstanding the superiority of St Bonaventure's proofs of the existence of God, I do not believe that modern philosophy will arrive at a stable foundation till it restores the dependence of the intellect on God, as laid down by the great mind of St Thomas.

NOTE D, p. 64.—ON INTUITION AND
IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE.

I need hardly say that I use the word intuition in the modern and not in the scholastic sense. I am quite aware that the Schoolmen seem to restrict it to an immediate knowledge of an object, resulting from its presence. Thus, the beatific vision is called "*visio intuitiva*," because it is the vision of God in Himself immediately present to the soul in heaven. The word is also applied to our perceptions of sensible objects. Thus, Durandus defines "*cognitio intuitiva*" to be "*illa quæ immediate tendit ad rem sibi præsentem objective, secundum ejus actualem existentiam: sicut cum video colorem existentem in pariete, vel rosam quam in manu teneo. Abstractiva dicitur omnis cognitio quæ habetur de re, non sic realiter præsentem in ratione objecti immediate cogniti.*" As far as I am aware, it is only sometimes in St Thomas, as quoted above, and in writers of the mystical school, that the word is used in a wider sense, like that in which it is now used, and applied to all immediate knowledge, whether resulting from the presence of the object or not, as, for instance, the knowledge of first principles. Thus, Thomas of Jesus says: "*Vis intellec-*

tiva in quantum est discursiva, dicitur ratio: in quantum est simplici apprehensione intuitiva, dicitur intellectiva." He goes on to give instances of this intuitive faculty in remarkable words. Secundum D. Thomam., i, qu. 79, 12, "In ratione speculativa est quidam habitus animæ concreatus quo principia prima in speculabilibus naturaliter terminis intellectis sine discursu mox ei innotescerent, ex quibus principiis procedit ratio ad notitiam conclusionum. Talia principia sunt hæc et similia: Tota majus est sua parte: in ratione vero practica alius est habitus concreatus animæ, quo prima principia in operabilibus cognoscit, ut quod Deo sit obediendum, bonum malo præferendum et similia. Et hic habitus secundum D. Thomam vocatur synderesis." De Cont. div. lib. 2, c. 2.

Two things seem equally evident from these passages: one, that the word intuition or kindred words are very rarely used by the Schoolmen in the modern sense; the other, that the existence of intuitive or non-inferential ideas is inculcated by them. To prevent mistakes, the following observations should be added.

1. The doctrine that the human mind possesses an intuition of the truth of the existence of God is widely different from the ontological theory. Ontologism means the denial of all ideas intermediate between God and the soul. Intuition, on the contrary, implies a faculty from which the mind without deductive reasoning elicits ideas, which carry with them their own evidence.

2. I think it may be allowed that St Thomas

nowhere asserts and certainly seems to deny that the knowledge of the existence of GOD is intuitive even in the modern sense.

3. I have not suppressed what I have said in former editions about the intuitive knowledge of GOD, because the view is, as far as I know, a lawful one. It seems to be the theory that "*DEUM* *existere est propositio per se nota quoad nos*," only clothed in modern language. Now it must not be forgotten that St Anselm and Albertus Magnus are quoted as holding this view. Again, St Bonaventure quotes St Anselm with approbation, and himself says: "*Tanta est veritas divini esse quod cum assensu non potest cogitari non esse, nisi propter ignorantiam cogitantis, qui ignorat quid est quod per nomen DEI dicitur.*"—*Liber i, Dist. 8; Part I, qu. 2.* Farther, even Viva, after arguing against the view in one sense, affirms the following proposition: "*Quamvis non sit per se notum quoad nos DEUM existere sub conceptu DEI, seu cumuli omnium perfectionum, est tamen per se notum DEUM existere sub conceptu aliquo convertibili cum DEO, puta Supremi Legislatoris, Numinis colendi,*" etc. *De DEO, Part I, Disp. i, art. 1, 6.* Accordingly, the passage respecting the intuition of the existence of GOD was allowed to stand by the careful examiner of my book, whom I have mentioned in the Preface. The following passages seem also to affirm the tenableness of the view.

Even the Thomist school allows that GOD is immediately, though confusedly, known under the notion of the ultimate end of our being, or else of

the highest good. "Non est dubium de DEO confuse accepto quia unusquisque illum sic immediate cognoscit cum suum appetat ultimum finem." Florez. *Theologia Scholastica*, tom. i, 51.

I will add but two quotations more from modern writers, one of which contains references to very ancient authorities: "In this sense Jacobi is right when he calls the idea of GOD inborn and immediately certain. *Vide* Saint Bonaventure, *Itiner. Ment.* c. 1, sqq., and in 1 Dist. qu. 1. The holy Fathers call man θεοδίδακτος, on account of this immanent consciousness of GOD. Thomassin. *Dogm. Theol. de DEO*, 1. 1, c. 3. Thus it is said in the Apostolical Constitution, viii, 12: "Thou hast given to man an inborn law (νόμον ἑμφυτον), so that he might have as a familiar possession, and in himself, the seeds of the knowledge of GOD (ὥπως οἴκοθεν καὶ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ ἔχοι τὰ σπέρματα τῆς θεογνωσίας)" Hettinger, *Der Beweis des Christenthums*.

Again, Greith, the present Bishop of St Gall, says, in his *Handbuch der Philosophie*, p. 24, "The existence of GOD is native to the human spirit, in the sense that it is given at once and immediately with the faculty of reason."

4. Nevertheless, the whole question of our intuitional faculties, and of the distinction between what the Germans call *Idee* and *Begriff*, is one which seems never to have been analysed, a task which I have by no means sufficient confidence in myself to attempt.

NOTE E, p. 82.—AUTHORITIES ON THE NON-EXTENSION OF MATTER.

I only claim for Kant an agreement with Leibnitz on the subject of the non-extension of matter. I am not acquainted with this portion of Kant's writings, and I am obliged to take his views secondhand from a trustworthy writer, who states them as follows:

“Kant a imaginé une hypothèse, qui sans avoir les avantages de celle de Boscovich, a le même inconvénient celui de conduire logiquement à la négation de l'étendue réelle. Kant suppose qu'il n'y a dans l'espace aucun lien absolument plein, aucun lien absolument vide: que les forces motrices, à elles seules, constituent les corps; que l'étendue n'est qu'un phénomène du mouvement, savoir, une expansion de forces motrices dans l'espace; qu'à la force expansive est opposée la force attractive en force de concentration; que la réaction étant égale à l'action, plus une force expansive est concentrée, plus elle tend à s'épandre, et qu'elle n'en peut être empêchée que par la force attractive d'une part, d'autre part les autres forces expansives qui lui font obstacle extérieurement; que la compressibilité est indéfinie; que l'impénétrabilité se réduit à l'impossibilité d'une compression infiniment intense et par conséquent de toute la matière, en un point mathématique, et que ce serait cette concentration impossible qui seule pourrait produire en ce point le plein absolu.”—Martin, “Philosophie spiritualiste de la nature,” tom. i, 363.

To show how widely spread are such views, I

subjoin a passage from Cousin's "Fragments Philosophiques," tom. i, p. 73. "Ne pourrait on réduire tous les modes réguliers d'action de la nature à deux modes qui dans leurs rapports avec l'action spontanée et réfléchié du moi et de la raison, manifesteraient une harmonie plus intime encore que celle que nous venons d'indiquer entre le monde intérieur et le monde extérieur? On entrevoit que je veux parler ici de l'expansion et de la concentration; mais tant que les travaux méthodiques n'auront pas converti ces conjectures en certitudes, j'espère et me tais; je me contente de remarquer que déjà les considérations philosophiques qui réduisent la notion du monde extérieur à celle de la force ont fait grande route et gouvernent à son insu la physique moderne. Quel physicien depuis Euler, cherche autre chose dans la nature que des forces et de lois? qui parle aujourd'hui d'atômes? et même les molécules, renouvelées, des atômes, qui les donne pour autre chose, qu'une hypothèse? Si le fait est incontestable, si la physique moderne ne s'occupe que de forces et de lois, j'en conclus rigoureusement que la physique, qu'elle le sache ou qu'elle l'ignore, n'est pas matérialiste, et qu'elle s'est faite spiritualiste le jour où elle a rejeté tout autre méthode que l'observation ou l'induction, lesquelles ne peuvent conduire qu'à des forces et à des lois, or qu'y a-t-il de matériel dans les forces et dans les lois?"

It may be useful to add a passage from a very different writer, which bears on the whole question, though not exactly on the subject of this note.

“ There is not the slightest reason for believing that what we call the sensible qualities of the object are a type of anything inherent in itself, or bear an affinity to its own nature. A cause does not, as such, resemble its effects; an east wind is not like the feeling of cold, nor heat like the steam of boiling water; why, then, should matter resemble our sensations? Why should the inmost nature of fire or water resemble the impressions made by these objects on our senses? And if not on the principle of resemblance, on what other principle can the manner in which objects affect us through our senses afford us any insight into the inherent nature of those objects? It may, therefore, be laid down as a truth, both obvious in itself and admitted by all whom it is at present necessary to take into consideration, that of the outward world we know and can know nothing, except the sensations which we experience from it.” “ The attempt, indeed, has been made by Reid and others to establish that, although some of the properties we ascribe to objects exist only in our sensations, others exist in the things themselves; and they ask from what sensations our notions of extension and figure have been derived? The gauntlet thrown down by Reid was taken up by Brown, who, applying greater powers of analysis than had previously been applied to the notions of extension and figure, showed clearly what are the sensations from which those notions are derived, viz.: sensations of touch, combined with sensations of a class previously too little adverted to by metaphysicians, those which have their seat in our mus-

cular frame. On this subject also, M. Cousin may be quoted in favour of the essential subjectivity of our conceptions of the primary qualities of matter, as extension, solidity," etc.—Mill's "System of Logic," vol. 1, p. 66.

The juxtaposition of these passages will suffice to show by what various writers and on what various grounds the essential extension of matter is denied.

NOTE F, p. 146.—ON THE USE OF THE WORD
"PHENOMENA."

It is necessary here to warn the reader that by phenomena I do not mean mere subjective appearances, that is, affections of our organs, caused immediately by God, without external cause. This view has been held by some theologians, especially by Cartesians, and has never been declared contrary to the faith. The vast majority of theologians, however, are strongly against it; and the Sacred Congregation, in 1649, condemned the following proposition: "*Accidentia Eucharistica non sunt accidentia realia, sed meræ illusiones, et præstigia oculorum.*" It seems then that, according to theologians, it is necessary to hold that the species are real. In the Holy Eucharist, then, it appears that there are certain qualities remaining after the conversion of the substance of bread, over and above the affections caused by them on our senses. As has been observed, it is very difficult to reconcile this with the Cartesian view, that material objects are simply extensions, and that what are called

qualities are simply effects mechanically caused on our senses by extension. If the extended object is taken away, it is not easy to see, on this view, what remains but the affection of the organism, nor how it can be caused, except by the immediate power of God. There is, however, no difficulty on the hypothesis mentioned in the text, that material bodies consist of a collection of unextended forces. Some of these forces are permanent, others are variable, for while the substance remains, the same phenomena are perpetually varying. Each body, therefore, may be considered to be a collection of changeable forces, resulting from the activity of a great substantial force. It is evident that the shifting forces may be looked upon as qualities emanating and radiating from a central force, which is the permanent source of them all, and which is the substance. It is also clearly conceivable that these forces should remain after the central force or substance is gone. On the other hand, Leibnitz found considerable difficulty in his way when he attempted to adjust this portion of theology to his views, because body, according to him, is a collection of monads; that is, of forces utterly independent of each other, and in no way whatsoever standing in the relation of cause and effect. It is, therefore, very hard to see why any of these forces are at all more substantial than others. *Vide* his letters to P. des Bosses, especially letter 21; and also Dr Russell's valuable notes to the "Systema Theologicum." I need not say that I am in no way committed to Leibnitz's doctrine of monads.

NOTE G, p. 241.—ON THE FREQUENCY OF
COMMUNION IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

I have spoken in the text of the general state of things in the Church; it is very possible, however, that in isolated places the custom of more frequent communion was kept up. In a passage to which I have referred, in Tauler's fourth sermon on *Corpus CHRISTI*, he seems to say that such was the case at Cologne. "*Es ist zu Cöln eine gute gewohnheit, das man gerne das heilige sacrament empfängt.*" This falls in curiously with a passage of Albertus Magnus, *de Euch.*, dist. vi, tract 2, c. 3. "*De his autem qui mulieres omni die communicant, videtur mihi quod acriter reprehendendi sunt; quia nimio usu vilescere faciunt sacramentum vel potius ex levitate mulierum putatur esse desiderium quam ex devotione causatum.*" From the severity, however, with which the writer speaks, I cannot help considering that the practice was connected with the vast amount of spiritual illusion which was fermenting on the banks of the Rhine; and the tone of Tauler's sermons falls in with this view. There is also a passage in James of Vitry's *Life of Blessed Mary of Ognies*, Bollandists, June 23, which implies that communion was not so infrequent at Liege as we have seen that it was elsewhere. We should expect this from the amount of devotion kept up in the towns of the Low Countries by such associations as the *Béguines*. It must not be forgotten also that the Church, as is proved by decrees of particular councils in the thirteenth century, especially in England, made continual efforts to

induce the faithful to communicate three times a year. Nevertheless, the exceeding infrequency of communion among saints living in the world, as well as the testimony of grave writers, such as Alexander of Hales and Scotus, in unimaginative scholastic treatises, incline me strongly to the view, that such councils were most imperfectly obeyed, and that communion more than once a year, except in particular places, was the exception. This is remarkably confirmed by Durandus, a similar writer, who says in the beginning of the fourteenth century: "*Postremo vero refrigescente devotione multorum statuit Innocentius Tertius ut saltem semel in anno se in Paschate fideles communicent, et adhuc pauci inveniuntur.*"—4, Dist. 12, qu. 3.

NOTE H, p. 275.—ON THE USE OF THE WORD
"COMMUNIO."

The passage is to be found in St Innocent's letter to Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse. I am aware that, in the opinion of Morinus, "*communio*" here signifies absolution; as, however, I have Petavius on my side, I venture to differ from him, and to consider that it means the Holy Eucharist. It is true that the words "*communio*" and "*viaticum*" are very ambiguous, and that Morinus contends that, if used without addition, they mean absolution. Notwithstanding, however, all difficulties of interpretation, I cannot see how "*pœnitentia*" in the Pope's letter can mean anything but the Sacrament of Penance with absolution. In what possible sense can Penance be given to a dying man if it

does not mean the Sacrament? In the parallel letter of Pope Celestine to the Bishops of Gaul, there is no doubt whatsoever that "pœnitentia" means absolution in the Sacrament of Penance, for it is equivalent to "liberare ex onere peccatorum." If this be the case, "communio," in St Innocent's letter, can only mean the Holy Eucharist. The only difficulty in the way of this interpretation is the use of "reconciliatio" and "remissio," as equivalent to "communio." Yet so intimately was full reconciliation connected in the minds of the Christians of the time with the reception of the Holy Communion that it is not wonderful that these words should be used of the whole act of readmission to the Church, including the being admitted to the Holy Eucharist, just as even now many of the poor cannot be persuaded that they have been absolved till they have received. For instance St Ambrose says, lib. ii, de Pœnit. c. 3, "Quotiescunque peccata donantur, corporis ejus Sacramentum sumimus ut per sanguinem ejus fiat peccatorum remissio." *Vide* also De Benedictionibus Patriarcharum, c. 9. "Altaris reconciliatio" is also a common phrase for the reception at once of the Holy Communion and restitution to Church communion. Another very strong reason for considering penance to include absolution is the frequent asseveration of the principle in the primitive Church, that penance was never imposed except with a view to absolution. *Vide* St Ambrose de Pœn. lib., c. 16; also St Cyprian's letter to Antonianus, and even Tertullian, quoted by Orsi, p. 146.

Thus it seems to be very probable that St Innocent means here the Holy Communion, whatever may be held of the use of the words “viaticum” and “communio” elsewhere. Certainly Morinus, lib. vi, c. 21, argues very ably that in the important thirteenth canon of Nicæa, ἐφόδιον and κοινωνία mean absolution. I would, however, though with diffidence, suggest that much may be said in favour of their meaning the Holy Eucharist. I do not see why the canon should not mean that the Blessed Sacrament should be given to the dying; in the latter clause εὐχαριστία would then be not contrasted with, but a synonym for κοινωνία. It is natural that whilst, as a general rule, the dying should be ordered to receive the Holy Eucharist, the bishop should still be commanded to see that there was no impediment. It is certainly very remarkable that John of Antioch’s version of the canons of Nicæa has καὶ κοινωνίας τυχὼν καὶ προσφορᾶς μετασχών, as if to do away with the ambiguity of κοινωνία, and to prove that ἐφόδιον means the Holy Eucharist. The same is the reading of the version in Hardouin, tom. 1, 430. Evidently the Arabic version, canon nineteen, understood “viaticum” to mean the Holy Communion.—Hardouin, p. 466. It is also evidently the reading of the version of the canons of Nicæa used in the sixth Council of Carthage.—Hardouin, 1247. These seem to be very strong reasons in favour of the view that ἐφόδιον means Holy Communion. It is true that in the seventy-seventh canon of the fourth Council of Carthage, “viaticum,” meaning seemingly abso-

lution, is contrasted with “*viaticum Eucharistiæ*.” On the other hand, a comparison of the canons from the Councils of Orange and Girona, alleged in Morinus, pp. 413, 414, with the seventy-sixth canon of the same Council of Carthage, incline me to think that even there “*viaticum*” means the Blessed Sacrament.

A strong confirmation of this view of Pope Innocent’s letter is contained in the seventh article of his letter to Decentius. No one can doubt that the penitents there directed to be absolved on Holy Thursday received the Holy Communion at once, yet there also “*remissio*” is used of their readmission, as in the controverted letter; and, most remarkably, Morinus himself, lib. 9, c. 3, interprets “*communio*,” in that letter to Decentius, of the Holy Communion.

NOTE J, p. 278.—ON PUBLIC PENANCE FOR
SECRET SINS.

The difficulty of settling the point is proved by the variety of the opinions of writers on the subject. It is worth while briefly to state the history of the controversy. Attention seems to have been first drawn to the subject by Jansenist writers. Arnauld boldly asserts that all those guilty of secret mortal sins of every kind were subjected to public penance, and deprived of the Holy Eucharist, under pain of refusal of absolution in the primitive Church. French Protestant writers, in arguing against the existence of the Sacrament of Penance, were not slow to avail themselves of this view, and pointed

out the practical impossibility of such a legislation and the consequent absurdity of the supposition. With characteristic obstinacy, however, the Jansenists stuck to their point. Boileau, in his History of Confession, though forced to give up a part of the view, still persists in saying that every species of sin, even of thought, if it was mortal, was subjected to some kind of public penance, and visited by the privation of the Holy Eucharist. "Defendo tantummodo pœnitentibus pro omni specie peccati mortalis aliquo tempore prudentia et arbitrio Episcopi præfinito, Eucharistiæ participatione interdictum fuisse."—Cap. 3, p. 56. "Fateri necesse est primis Ecclesiæ temporibus confestim actam fuisse quandam pœnitentiam publicam pro quibusdam peccatis cogitationum quibus voluntatis consensus conjunctus fuerat;" and in order to cover the monstrous conclusion, he goes the length of asserting, cap. 3, p. 55, "that very few sins of thought are mortal." Petavius, in his "Pénitence Publique," first proved clearly that only three kinds of secret mortal sins were subjected to public penance. He, however, as well as Albaspinæus, still held that absolution was never given to those three kinds of sin. Morinus and Orsi both refuted this opinion. The controversy was now reduced to one point. Morinus holds that secret sins of those three kinds were not absolved without public penance; Francolinus, on the contrary, is of opinion that secret sins were *in foro interno*, never visited with public penance without the consent of the sinner, which was never extorted by the refusal of

absolution. His theory is as follows: speaking of the passages in which Fathers and Councils speak of public penance for secret sins he says: "In ejusmodi locis aut non agitur de Pœnitentiis sacramentalibus sed extra-sacramentalibus, (Ecclesiam vero posse in foro externo publice punire etiam occulta delicta, non est dubium,) aut agitur quidem de Pœnitentiis Sacramentalibus iisque publicis, sed quæ libere acceptabantur, cum pro delictis occultis imponebantur."—Cler. Rom. 1, Disp. vii. Perhaps it may be that the truth lies between the opinions of these two writers, and that though the Church, as a general rule, required public penance for secret sins of those three kinds, she nevertheless easily accepted a secret penance when a public penance could not be had. Besides the arguments brought forward in the text, it may be well to add a few more.

1. There is a remarkable passage in Origen's commentary on the Psalms, Hom. 2, in Ps. 37, on the necessity of confession, which deserves to be cited at length. "Si peccator ipse sui accusator fiat, dum accusat semetipsum et confitetur, simul evomit et delictum atque omnem morbi digerit causam. Tantummodo circumspice diligentius, cui debeas confiteri peccatum tuum: proba prius medicum cui debeas causam languoris exponere, qui sciat infirmari cum infirmante, flere cum flente, qui condolendi noverit disciplinam, ut ita demum, si quid ipse dixerit, qui se prius et eruditum medicum ostenderit, si quid *consilii* dederit, facias et sequaris, si intellexerit et præviderit talem esse

languorem tuum, qui in conventu totius Ecclesiæ exponi debeat et curari, ex quo fortassis et cæteri ædificari poterunt et tu ipse facile sanari multa hoc deliberatione, et satis perito medici illius *consilio* procurandum est." This passage was written about the year 247, and contains a whole picture of the confessional of the time. It shows that there was a secret tribunal, a *forum internum*; that a sinner might choose his confessor; that the question whether public penance should be done belonged to the decision of that confessor, and lastly, that it was a matter of counsel.

2. Let the reader look attentively at the arguments brought forward by Morinus for his opinion, lib. v, c. 9. It seems to me that several of them imply that the Church principally had a view to the punishment of scandalous sins in the discipline which is there referred to. For instance, the example of Theodosius is brought forward; he is said to have been visited with public penance, "Maxime quia peccatum ejus celari non potuit."—St Aug., Sermon. 392. Again, in the passage quoted as from St Augustine (though really from St Cæsarius of Arles), the argument used for public penance is, "Quia justum est ut qui cum multorum destructione se perdiderit, cum multorum ædificatione se redimat." If this is the case, it is easily conceivable that secret sins which gave no scandal should be exempted from the operation of the canons which principally respected scandals.

3. Morinus himself shows that there were very considerable differences in the mode of treating

secret and public sinners. He says, lib. 5, c. 16, "Impositio Pœnitentiæ publicæ ob crimina occulta, sicut et reconciliatio, privatim a Presbytero et Episcopo inconsulto plerumque fiebat." It seems to me that the arguments of Morinus in the same place, to prove that in these cases the penance was public, are very inconclusive. Granting, however, that the penance was, as a general rule, public, there would be surely little difficulty in allowing the penitent to do his penance in private, that is, not to join the crowd of public penitents, when he had already been let off the publicity of the imposition, and the absolution. Morinus allows that confession, imposition of penance, and absolution were, by a sort of dispensation in many cases, all in private; it seems difficult to suppose that the dispensation was not often, by a parity of reasoning, extended also to the publicity of the penance.

4. It was an acknowledged maxim with the early Church that, whenever the number of sinners was so great that a schism might be dreaded, she relaxed her rules of public penance. For instance, St Augustine says that, in his time, many sins had become so common that they dared not excommunicate a layman who was guilty of them.—Enchiridion, c. 80. In another place, Cont. Ep. Parminiani, lib. 3, 14, speaking of excommunication, he says: "Quum idem morbus plurimos occupaverit, nihil aliud bonis restat nisi dolor et gemitus, nam *consilia separationis* et inania sunt et pernicioiosa, si contagio peccandi multitudinem invaserit." There can be no plainer proof that the Church

enforced public penance when it could, but relaxed the law when it was found impossible to exact the penalty. It is curious also that the saint calls "separation" "a counsel," an expression equivalent to another used by St Cæsarius of Arles, where he exhorts his hearers "of their own accord to remove themselves from the communion of the Church,"—St Aug. ed. Ben., tom. v, Appendix, Serm. 104.

5. There is a remarkable passage in a sermon ascribed by some to St Augustine, by the Benedictines to St Cæsarius of Arles. The preacher represents the sinner exhorted to public penance as remonstrating: "Forte est aliquis qui dicat: ego in militia positus sum, uxorem habeo et ideo pœnitentiam agere quomodo possum?" The saint answers: "Quasi nos quando Pœnitentiam suademus, hoc dicamus et ut unusquisque magis sibi capillos studeat auferre et non peccata dimittere et vestimenta potius evellat quam mores." In other words, he would have been satisfied with a firm purpose of amendment without the external signs of public penance.—St Aug. ed. Ben., tom. 5, Appendix, Serm. 258.

6. Finally, the praise given to Fabiola, a lady of rank, for appearing among public penitents, is utterly inconsistent with the notion of its being compulsory.—Fleury, lib. 18, 21.

NOTE K, p. 302.—ON JANSENIST INSINCERITY.

I have in the text accused Arnould of insincerity, especially in pretending that Jansenists only wished

to introduce public penance for public sins. Insincerity is a grave accusation, which I should not bring forward unless I had grave reasons for making the charge, which I will now substantiate. I am perfectly aware that Jansenists varied in their statements and in their practice; this very variation is the chief proof of their want of veracity. It is useless, therefore, to bring counter-assertions from their writings: these only tell more strongly in my favour, if I can oppose to them contrary facts and assertions. Let the reader weigh the following proofs that the Jansenists wished to introduce public penance for secret sins. The absolute necessity for public penance follows directly from the opinion that absolutions given previous to the performance of public satisfaction are null. That such was the opinion of Jansenists seems to me plain.

1. Among the propositions delated to Cardinal Mazarin, as being contained or fairly deduced from the Augustinus, was the following: “*Que la puissance des clefs ne réside dans l'Eglise que pour ceux qui font Pénitence publique.*” Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, tom. ii, pp. 149, 184.

2. The Jansenist ecclesiastics of the parish of St Merri, at Paris, taught expressly, “*que l'absolution sacramentelle, sans la satisfaction, était nulle.*” —*Ibid.*, p. 146. What they meant by satisfaction is proved by their practice quoted below.

3. In the year 1672, an anonymous Jansenist book was published in Belgium, containing the following proposition: “*Ordinem præmittendi satisfactionem absolutioni induxit non politia aut*

institutio Ecclesiastica sed ipsa CHRISTI lex et præscriptio, natura rei id ipsum quodammodo dictante."

4. Let us examine attentively Arnauld's doctrine on the subject. I am quite aware that in Part ii, c. 15, of the *Fréquente Communion*, he says: "Ce serait une grand erreur de condamner généralement toutes les absolutions et communions, qui précèdent l'accomplissement de la satisfaction." It follows from this that he does not say that *all* absolutions before satisfaction are null. Nevertheless, it follows from the principles which he lays down that the enormous majority of absolutions thus given are invalid, as Viva has shown on the 16th proposition, condemned by Alexander VIII. Again, he does not say that he requires public penance for all mortal sins; nevertheless, it follows from his principles, as we shall see that St Vincent of Paul has shown.

1. He lays it down as a rule that arguments drawn from the universal tradition of the Church are not probable, but demonstrative. He then declares that that universal tradition shows that public penance was exacted for all mortal sins whatsoever in the primitive times, an opinion which of itself separates, by an abyss, Jansenist rigorism from the spirit of the Church. This opinion he tries to prove at length throughout the second part of his book. In c. 3, he proves that the Church exacted public penance for secret sins. He says, c. 8, that St Leo looked upon ecclesiastical penance as "remède nécessaire pour rentrer dans l'espérance de la vie éternelle" for all sins after baptism, and

that it is not a canonical ordinance, but ordained by CHRIST Himself. He also says that this was the perpetual tradition of the Church and the common sentiment of all the Church. From all this, notwithstanding all protestations, it follows rigorously that public penance is necessary.

2. He lays it down as a general rule, that it is "obligatory" to perform the penance before communion, and the context shows that he includes absolution: (he joins absolution to communion, pp. 401, 404, 406, 503), the contrary is the exception.

3. He says in many places, for instance pp. 492, 499, that the Fathers universally held that man to make an unworthy communion, who communicates before having done his penance.

4. He tells us of but one exception to this general rule, viz., absolutions given to the dying, which he takes care to inform us are generally useless. —Part ii, c. 15. In that place, amongst others, he speaks of "*the obligation* of doing penance before reconciliation." It follows from this that, as a general rule, absolutions given before the accomplishment of the penance are null, since an absolution given to a man not disposed to fulfil an obligation is useless.

5. I might have hesitated to accuse Arnauld of unverity, if St Vincent of Paul had not preceded me. I may well shelter myself under the authority of one who is a contemporary witness, one whose name is a synonym for charity, and whose early friendship for St Cyran exempts him from the

charge of prejudice. I quote from letters written by him to the Abbé d'Horgny, and cited in the Abbé Maynard's new life of the saint, lib. v, c. 3.

“ Quant à ce qu'on attribue au livre de la Fréquente Communion de retirer le monde de la fréquente hantise des sacrements, je vous répondrai qu'il est véritable que ce livre détourne puissamment tout le monde de la hantise fréquente de la sainte Communion et de la sainte confession, quoiqu'il fasse semblant, pour mieux couvrir son jeu d'être fort éloigné de ce dessein.

“ Il est vrai que ce livre a été fait principalement pour renouveler la pénitence ancienne comme *nécessaire pour entrer en grace avec DIEU*. Car quoique l'auteur fasse quelquefois semblant de proposer cette pratique ancienne comme seulement plus utile, il est certain néanmoins qu'il la veut pour nécessaire, puisque par tout le livre il la représente comme une des grandes vérités de notre religion, comme la pratique des apôtres et de toute l'église durant douze siècles, comme une tradition immuable, comme une institution de JESUS CHRIST. Il prend pour vérité l'opinion qui porte qu'on ne trouve dans les anciens Pères *que la pénitence publique en laquelle l'Eglise exerçat la puissance de ses clefs* ; d'où il s'ensuit par une conséquence très claire que M. Arnauld a dessein de rétablir la pénitence publique pour toutes sortes de péchés mortels, et que ce n'est pas une calomnie de l'accuser, de cela, mais une vérité que l'on tire aisément de son livre, pourvu qu'on le lise sans préoccupation d'esprit. Vous me dites en second lieu qu'il est faux

que M. Arnauld ait voulu introduire l'usage de faire pénitence avant l'absolution pour les gros pécheurs. Je réponds que M. Arnauld ne veut pas seulement introduire la pénitence avant l'absolution, pour les gros pécheurs, mais il en fait une loi générale pour tous ceux qui sont coupables de péché mortel." After quoting some words of the book he adds: " Il faut être aveugle pour ne pas connaître par ces paroles que M. Arnauld croit qu'il est nécessaire de différer l'absolution pour tous les péchés mortels jusqu'à l'accomplissement de la pénitence; et en effet n'ai je pas vu pratiquer cela par M. de St Cyran et ne le fait on pas encore à l'égard de ceux qui se livrent entièrement à leur conduite? Cependant cette opinion est une hérésie manifeste." After the witness of the saint I might dispense myself from proving, from the practice of the Jansenists, that they wished to introduce public penance for secret sins; I, however, add the following fact:

The apologists of the Archbishop of Sens pretended that this public penance was inflicted only for public sins. How far this was true will appear from the following passage: " M. du Hamel, lorsqu'il était curé du diocèse de Sens, avait distingué les pénitents en quatre ordres. Ceux qui n'étaient coupables que de péchés secrets, formaient le premier: ils assistaient, à l'office tout au bas de l'Eglise et séparés des autres paroissiens de quatre pas de distance." Vie de M. Olier, tom. ii, 145. Du Hamel was afterwards parish priest of St Méry at Paris. Arnauld, notwithstanding his protest that

he only meant public penance for public sins, was perfectly well aware of Du Hamel's practice, for he alludes to it in the preface of his "Fréquente Communion." *Vide* "Défense de la Discipline qui s'observe dans le diocèse de Sens," p. 140. The absurdity of the revival of primitive discipline by De Gondrin was not lost upon his contemporaries. He was the Archbishop of Sens mentioned by De Retz as being too scandalous a prelate for him to imitate. Ste Beuve, Port Royal, tom. iv, 258.

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