

## The Catholic Dictionary and the Brown Scapular.

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CONTINUED.



It is true that the wearing of the Brown Scapular still gives a share in certain privileges attached to the Order of Mount Carmel, but if the chief of all these privileges turns out to be a fraud perpetrated by the Carmelites themselves, we can scarcely expect that much reliance will be placed upon the efficacy of the rest. It becomes a symbol of devotion without anything tangible and trustworthy attaching to it, except a vague and undefined impression, that the wearer is in some sort of way under Our Lady's protection. To place an absolute reliance on it, to cherish it with loving and undoubting confidence in its efficacy, to regard it as a pledge of our perseverance, the mark whereby Our Lady will recognize us as having a certain claim to her all-powerful intercession at the hour of death, becomes a silly superstition. It may even generate a false presumption, and encourage the sinner in false hopes and most dangerous expectations of a help from Mary that she has never promised to give. The sinner may persuade himself that he is safe of his salvation, if only he wears to the last this magical scapular, and thus put off repentance until too late, on the ground that his Scapular will prevent his falling into the fires of hell. The general tendency of the article we are discussing is to crush, or at least to discountenance, this "idol" of confidence in the Brown Scapular. It would have us throw to the winds the idea that we may rest assured of the salvation of those who die with the Scapular around their necks. It allows the piety and utility of the institution, and that is a visible token that the wearer owns himself one of our Lady's children, but the words of Bossuet to this effect are quoted, in which he takes care to add that Mary will be our Mother "if we live in our Lord Jesus Christ"—a pious sentiment, the truth of which is undeniable, but in which we read between the lines that Scapular, or no Scapular, Mary will not answer for the safety of the sinner.

Benedict the Fourteenth, is also quoted as admitting that too many abuse these symbols, or badges, by a misplaced confidence in them. Now, it is perfectly true that such an abuse of the Brown Scapular is theoretically possible, and in the controversy with heretics various Catholic writers are careful to point out that unless in the heart of the dying sinner there is present the love of God and contrition for sin, nothing in the world can save his soul. If a Catholic continues in a state of sin up to the moment when the soul leaves his body, to hell he must go, Scapular or no Scapular. If he has not made that act of submission to God and aversion from sin, which is the condition of eternal salvation, the Scapular will not act as a charm. Nay, the very graces it carries with it would only increase his damnation by reason of his greater guilt in rejecting them. We must be very explicit on this point, else we should justly lay ourselves open to the charge of what would really be a most degrading and demoralizing superstition. To suppose that aught can avail to deliver from hell save love to God and faith in Jesus Christ, would be a most abominable and damnable doctrine. We must not allow any mistake as to this. But this is not the point at issue. The question is not whether a Catholic wearing the Scapular and dying in sin would lose his soul. Every one must admit that he would. The real question is, whether a Catholic, who wears the Scapular up to the moment of death, does die in a state of sin. This is the real meaning of our Lady's promise—that every one who dies with this Scapular upon him, shall previously obtain from God the grace of contrition: that his devotion to the Holy Mother of God, evidenced in his wearing of her badge and livery, shall earn for him such good dispositions at the hour of his death, that in virtue of them, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he shall be received into the Kingdom of Heaven. It may be objected that this too is a demoralizing doctrine, that it encourages men to sin, because, forsooth, by wearing the Scapular, they can ensure their conversion before their death. They can indulge in every possible vice, and yet need not fear, since saving grace can be obtained, and Heaven can be purchased by the very simple device of putting on a little bit of