

show thyself unto the priest." Who is the true priest, but he which is the Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedech? Whereby this holy father doth understand that both the priesthood and the law being changed, we ought to acknowledge none other priest for deliverance from our sins but our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, being our Sovereign Bishop, doth with the sacrifice of His body and blood, offered once for ever upon the altar of the cross, most effectually cleanse the spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those that with true confession of the same do flee unto Him. It is most evident and plain that this aricular confession hath not His warrant of God's word, else it had not been lawful for Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople, upon a just occasion to have put it down. For when anything ordained of God is by lewdness abused, the abuse ought to be taken away, and the thing itself suffered to remain. Moreover these are St. Augustin's words: "What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confession, as though they were able to heal my diseases? A curious sort of men to know another man's life, and slothful to correct and amend their own. Why do they seek to hear of me what I am, which will not hear of thee what they are? And how can they tell, when they hear by me of myself, whether I tell the truth or not; sith no mortal man knoweth what is in man, but the spirit of man which is in him." Augustin would not have written thus if aricular confession had been used in his time. Being therefore not led with the conscience thereof, let us with fear and trembling, and with a true contrite heart, use that kind of confession that God doth command in His word; and then doubtless, as He is faithful and righteous, he will forgive us our sins, and make us clean from all wickedness. I do not say but that, if any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and show the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's word: but it is against the true Christian liberty, that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it has been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance.

UNDUE EXALTATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

I feel myself justified then in asserting that, as our formularies give no authority for a systematic private confession, so a fair-minded student of the great Church of England divines would not rise from a careful perusal of their writings with a conviction that our Church has put forth for its Presbyters those arrogant claims of priestly authority which Protestants justly regard as the reproach of the Church of Rome. But we live now in an age given to reckless extremes. And I do not hesitate to say that there is great danger lest some of our young clergy especially—and some also who are old enough to know better, often led away by their juniors—claim for themselves priestly rights which are both alien to the whole spirit of our Church's teaching, and have no warrant whatsoever in the Word of God. My reverend brethren, it is my firm belief that there is danger amongst us lest a mode of teaching may gain ground, which, as it would so exalt the sacraments administered by the clergy as to turn them into superstitious charms, would make the clergy themselves spiritual despots over the laity. You know, that at this moment, a deep alarm pervades the country lest the habitual establishment of the Confessional, as a means of priestly influence may be employed to give him, who thus magnify their office, and influence subversive of the legitimate exercise by individuals of the duties of the Christian conscience, and dangerous to the peace of families. I believe that this

alarm is exaggerated. Comparatively very few persons wish to introduce the Confessional into our system; and the authorities of the Church, I am persuaded, are quite alive to the danger.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE CASE.

Suffer me, as I am indeed in duty bound, to state my own views on this painful subject. A clergyman of this diocese—a man of high character and greatly esteemed by myself as well as by his own friends—has addressed to me a published letter on Confession and Absolution, with reference to the case of his curate, whose license I felt myself bound lately to withdraw. The only very distinct impression I have derived from this letter is, that the author of it thinks it his duty to state, in a manly and straight forward manner, that he views this subject very differently from me; that he claims for himself the right of admitting his people to confession in a more systematic way than, I believe, has hitherto ever been sanctioned by the authorities of the Church of England, even in the days when the Presbyter's office was most highly magnified; and thus of introducing into his parochial arrangements a practice which in my judgment is by no means conducive to the good of souls; that he puts forward what are called very high—in my opinion, more justly called very exaggerated—views of priestly power; that he has formed also a very different estimate from myself of the social aspects of this question; and that he is very naturally and generously anxious that his curate should not suffer in public estimation for doing that under his authority, which, I cannot but think, if he, the superior, had exercised sufficient control, never would have been done at all. There are minor matters in this letter; and both in the letter and its appendix there are what appear to me some inaccuracies of statement regarding myself, which I am sure are not intentional, and which, therefore, as they simply concern myself, are not worth dwelling on. The general purport of the whole letter as I understand it, I say, is, that the author claims for himself the right of admitting to confession, with certain exceptions to be judged of by his own discretion, any of his people who present themselves; that, as I understand him, whether I think it right or no, he proposes to receive them in the vestry, in his surplice, to require them to make a confession on their knees before a cross, repeating forms of words in use amongst persons of his school, before absolution is pronounced. He does not so far as I understand his letter, at all clearly intimate whether, when persons so present themselves, he will subject them to a series of minute questions as to their thoughts and actions, which most men of calm judgment amongst us regard as dangerous alike to the questioner and the questioned. I believe fully that he would not himself have recourse to this system of questioning; I trust he is ready to use his influence to discourage it in others. Neither do I distinctly learn from his letter—though this may be from my own fault—whether the writer intends by himself or his curates to urge upon his people that confession is a duty which it is dangerous for them to neglect. Yet this is an important point; for obviously, though a clergyman may in theory allow that, while the Church of Rome insists on confession, the Church of England leaves it voluntary—he may yet practically so preach on its benefits, and so urge his people to avail themselves of it, that with sensitive minds the effect may be much the same as if it were insisted on as compulsory. I am ready, however, to believe that the author intends to intimate that some caution will be exercised by him in this respect.

Now, my rev. brethren, with reference to the practice thus avowed and defended, I will first

state my own views; and secondly, how far I shall think myself justified in interposing by my authority to prevent evil effects.

THE BISHOP'S OWN VIEWS ON CONFESSION.

I would remark, before we go further, with respect to the whole of that department of the pastor's office, in which he has to deal with the individual souls of his people suffering under a sense of sin in the private ministering of spiritual consolation, that this is almost the most difficult, as it is the most delicate part of his functions. It would be very unlike the tact and prudence usually displayed by the authorities of the Church of Rome, if they allowed any priest to be a confessor without special license. And our own Church warning us distinctly that the private adviser of his people's souls must be discreet and learned, holds out no engagement to every raw young man, the moment he has received Priest's orders, to embark on duties for which he is not fitted by age, character, and experience of life.

But, moreover, there is a good deal of confusion in men's minds as to the questions at issue between the advocates and opponents of confession, which it is well to clear. We who disapprove any approach to the introduction into the Church of England of the Confessional, as it is technically called, of course do not forget the injunctions of our Prayer-book, which call upon us all to make public confession of our sins daily, as we approach to receive comfort from hearing the declaration, which the minister is authorised by the rules of the Church to pronounce, of God's willingness to pardon and absolve all those that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel. Neither do we shut our eyes to the fact that, previously to their receiving the holy communion, those persons—*who, having tried, find that they cannot by self-examination and confession to Almighty God with full purpose of amendment of life and endeavours after reconciliation with those whom they have offended, attain to a full trust in God's mercy, and quiet their own consciences, but require further comfort or counsel—are exhorted to seek the aid of some discreet and learned minister of God's word, that they may open their grief, and, having the comfort of being distinctly assured of God's willingness to pardon them, may receive ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of their consciences and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.*

Neither, again, do we forget further that the pastor who visits any member of his flock labouring under dangerous sickness, if he finds the sick man to be troubled in conscience with any weighty matter, is directed to move him to make special confession of his sins, that thus opening his heart, he may, if he seems truly penitent, have the consolation of hearing from his pastor's mouth before he dies, that God of His great mercy in Jesus Christ is ready to pardon him; and be assured that, great as his sins are, he is not excluded from the benefit of dying in communion with that Church which is Christ's body! We are forgetful of none of these points. The passages which treat of Confession and Absolution in our Prayer-book speak, I believe, in this language of the comfort which is in store for the repentant sinner's soul, when either publicly in the congregation or alone before God, or calling in the aid of his spiritual adviser, he confesses his sin, and begs God for pardon and reconciliation. God forbid that in this controversy our word should ever escape from us, which seems to throw an obstacle in the way of the overburdened soul, either in health or in sickness, opening its griefs to a trusted pastor. God forbid, also, that we should deny that much good may be done by discreet pious men when their aid is thus invited. My rev. brethren, on this subject it is right that