

advise their penitents regarding their future conduct in the minutest details, it is necessary that they should be equipped specially for this duty. The discussion of ethical questions accordingly occupies a place immensely larger in their seminaries for the education of the clergy than in similar Protestant institutions. In looking over any catalogue of their religious publications one is struck by the number of works on moral theology and the great value that is attached to the subject. The discussions in them cover the minutest details and touch the most delicate matters in life. Arguments and opinions, pro and con, are arrayed in the most exhaustive method and conclusions are profusely illustrated by cases of the nature of those that fall to be dealt with in the actual practice of the confessional.

One would naturally expect some worthy result from such abundant labours. We have but to open these numerous works, however, to be cured of any such hopes. In the evolution of life biologists allow a large place to the process of degeneration as well as for upward advance. It is quite evident that the ethical development of Christianity has not escaped the operation of the same law. From the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas down to the latest work issued on the subject these treatises are utterly dreary, formal, useless, and vain for any good purpose in the education of the conscience for genuine Christian service. They are as far removed from the large broad free spirit of the New Testament teaching as is possible to conceive anything which professes to be based upon it. The system is detailed even to pettiness, and while some of the ruling principles invoked are sound enough, others are so distorted by the dominant ecclesiasticism as to set the whole structure awry. The interests of the church are uniformly set above the interests of pure morality, and the disciplinary laws of the church as having a higher validity than the most obvious dictates of conscience.

Among the casuists who have laboured most assiduously to bring this system to perfection, the Jesuits of the seventeenth century attained a somewhat notorious pre-eminence and all too plainly revealed the real trend of it. By the dexterous use of recognized principles they showed how the