

ability of the Pope to condone sins; but Clement VI. settled that point in his Bull of 1342 as follows: "The whole human race could have been saved by one single drop of the blood of Jesus; but so much of this blood has been shed that this copiousness, which could not have been in vain, constitutes an enormous and inexhaustible treasure belonging to the church, and to this treasure the Pope alone has the key, and can draw from it eternally for the purpose of condoning sins."

Whoever made a pilgrimage to this or that shrine of grace, and sacrificed the necessary amount of money, could gain absolution for past and even for future sins. In Silesia there was, in the last century, such a shrine, with a picture of "The Mother of God," and once this shrine was robbed of all its jewels and valuables. The priests soon found the thief, in the person of one of Frederick the Great's soldiers, and they complained to the king. The soldier admitted his possession of the missing articles, but said that the Virgin Mary had given them to him. The king then asked the priests whether this could be possible. They answered that of course it was possible, though very improbable. In consequence, the soldier was not punished; but the great king issued an order to his soldiers, on pain of death, never to receive any more presents from the Virgin Mary.

Some relics were exhibited but once every seven years. This was done to attract people through the rarity of this privilege, and so that the interest should not flag. In 1496, 142,000 devoted people flocked to Aix la Chapelle, to see the gigantic coat of Mary, the baby napkin of Jesus made of yellowish felt, and the cloth upon which had lain the detached head of John the Baptist. The harvest was magnificent. In 1818 there was a revival, and these old rags were trotted out again, but this time only forty thousand pilgrims came. The Reformation, the Revolution and much-hated Rationalism, had rent a large hole in the old superstition. Yet in 1844, as I mentioned before, the seamless coat of Christ was shown at Treves, and about a million of believers came there to kiss that old garment. The same show was held in Treves again in 1891.