

THE CONFESSORIAL—THE BISHOP OF DERRY TO LORD STANLEY.
(Continued.)

To your assertion, my lord, that the confession, as practised in Ireland, is dangerous to society, I find, in the first place, oppose the opinion of kindred spirits—men who, like yourself, was not much in love with the Catholic clergy, the Catholic Church, or Catholicity in general. Believe me, my lord, when compared with them, notwithstanding your pride of intellect and erudition, you are merely a baby in swaddling clothes. The first witness against you, my lord, is,

Voltaire—He, a Protestant, in the proper sense of the word, says: "There is no more wise institution than that of confession. The most of mankind guilty of crimes, are naturally tormented with remorse. The lawgivers who established mysteries and expiations, were equally anxious to prevent the criminals, under the influence of despair, from rushing recklessly into new crimes. Confession is an excellent thing—a bridle on inveterate crimes. It is excellent for disposing hearts, ulcerated with hatred, to forgive; and the unjust injuries they have done to their neighbour. The enemies of the Roman church, who oppose so salutary an institution, have taken away from man the greatest check that can be imagined on iniquity. The wise men of antiquity have all recognised its importance. The Catholic religion has consecrated that of which God permitted human wisdom to perceive the advantage and embrace its shadows."

The next witness, my lord, is the celebrated Raynal, the author of the "Philosophical and Political History of the Indies." Though the enemy of all religion, he recognises the excellence of confession, with all its secrecy, as practised in the Catholic Church. "The Jesuits," says he, "established in Paraguay a Theocratic government with the practice of confession—the very basis on which religion reposes. It alone is a substitute for all penal laws—preserves and watches over the purity of morals. In Paraguay, religion more powerful than the force of arms, conducted the criminal to the knees of the magistrate, where, far from palliating his crimes, repentance made him aggravate them, where far from eluding punishment, a humble suppliant, he demanded it on his knees. The more severe it was the more it tranquilised the conscience of the criminal. This chastisement which everywhere else terrifies the criminal, here consoles him by banishing remorse by expiation. The people of Paraguay have had no criminal laws, because each person voluntarily accused and punished himself. All their laws were precepts of religion." "The best of all governments," continues Raynal, would be that of a Theocracy in which the tribunal of confession would be established." So much, my lord, for the evidence in our favor of the most virulent enemy that ever wielded a pen against the Catholic religion.

I beg now, my lord, to introduce you to the opinions of a friend—an ungenial spirit, I admit, as a lover of truth, though a highly distinguished member of your own church—Lord F. Williams, in his Letters of Atticus, says—"No person in the Catholic communion can approach the Holy Eucharist without having confessed all their sins without distinction or exception, in the tribunal of confession; and no minister can give them permission to approach the holy table without having first purified themselves with all the necessary dispositions. But these indispensable dispositions are, contrition, the precise and general avowal of all the faults they committed—the expiation of every injustice—the full restitution of everything illegally acquired—the pardon of every injury received—the interruption of every criminal and scandalous connection—the renunciation of envy, pride, hatred, avarice, ambition, dissimulation, ingratitude—and of every feeling opposed to charity. It is, moreover, at the same time, necessary in this tribunal to give a sacred pledge to God, to henceforth avoid even the most trivial faults, and to strictly accomplish all the sublime laws of the Gospel. What securities, what pledges, are not there exacted from each individual to discharge his social duties—to practice every virtue—integrity, charity, mercy! Here conscience is regulated before the tribunal of God, not before that of the world. Here the criminal is his own accuser, and not his judge; and while the Christians of other communions, after a partial examination, pronounce in their own cause, and absolve themselves with indulgence, the Catholic Christian is scrupulously examined by another, awaits the sentence of Heaven, and sighs after that consoling absolution which is being accorded to

him refused or deferred in the name of the Most High God. What an admirable method of establishing among men a mutual confidence—a perfect harmony in the exercise of their respective duties! The authority of the prince cannot degenerate into despotism, nor the liberty of the people into licentiousness. The magistrate, in the administration of justice must be impartial, the senator, equitable and disinterested—the priest, pure and zealous in his ministrations—the soldier, loyal—the subject faithful, and the sovereign just. If, in a Roman Catholic state, no person absented himself from this tribunal, the question would not then be what is the best of governments; but rather in such a government what need would there be for any other laws. Perhaps that all human laws would be there as superfluous and as useless as they are ineffectual anywhere, but where they repose on the foundation of the Catholic religion. Virtue, justice, morality, must be the basis of all governments. But it is impossible to establish virtue, justice, morality, on any solid foundation without the tribunal of penance, because this tribunal, the most dreadful of all tribunals, seizes on the conscience, and directs it more efficaciously than any other tribunal. But this tribunal is in the exclusive possession of the Roman Catholics."

This, my lord, is the opinion of one of the most enlightened of your Protestants, on the Confessional—the Catholic Confessional, of course, with all its strict fidelity and secretness. It is ours who know it well by experience. What say you, my lord? That it is of course dangerous to the civil government and to the peace of the community?

One other Protestant witness against you, my lord, with whom, since the Reformation we have had none of any creed to compare, if we except Sir Thomas More, Bacon, and our own immortal Burke. Hear what he says of the Confessional and its secrecy, which you say is, with us, carried to an extent dangerous alike to the civil government and the peace of the community. "Hear what the illustrious Leibnitz, Newton's rival in speculative science, and vastly his superior in anything else says on this subject in his 'Theological System.' "We cannot deny," says he, "that this institution is worthy of the Divine wisdom. Nothing assuredly so beautiful—nothing so pure—worthy in the whole Christian religion. The tribunal of penance was the admiration of the Chinese and the Japanese. The necessity of confession, in truth, avails many men from iniquity—and offers the greatest consolation to those who are fallen away from virtue. I, therefore, consider that a pious, grave, and prudent confessor is the great organ of the Divinity for the salvation of souls. By his counsels he regulates our affections—fixes attention on our defects—induces us to avoid the occasion of sin—to make restitution for the injustice done to our neighbour—and to repair the scandal given—to dissipate doubt and hesitation—to raise up the cast down broken spirit—to heal in a word, any mitigate all the evils of sad afflicted humanity. If it be difficult in human matters to find anything more excellent than a faithful friend, how super-excellent must it not be, when this friend is wound by the inviolable religion of a divine sacrament, and obliged to keep unmovable faith with you while he succeeds you."

What say you, my lord, again to the Confessional and its secrecy? Of course that it is dangerous to the civil government and the peace of the community!

Perhaps, my lord, that, from the traditions of your noble house, that, through ages of terror, bravely stood by the ark of God, and down to a recent period, gloried in the name of Catholic, you will not consider it amiss in me to bring up in the rear of infidelity and sectarianism a few venerable names, who have even still, though long ago gone to their crown, left like the departed sun, streaks of mellowed glory on the ecclesiastical horizon of England.

Here the first Catholic witness against you, Aleniz—"Should we not give in the confession of our faith to the priests in holy baptism, and remove Satan, that we may be washed from all our sins by holy grace, and by the ministrations of the priest? Why, therefore, in the second baptism of penance should we not equally need the succour of the priest, so that by a humble confession, aided by the Divine grace, we should be absolved from all the sins we committed after our first baptism." So much, my lord, from the pride of England and the glory of France.

The next witness against you, my lord, is no less a personage than Egbert, Bishop of York.

He wrote a penitential, for the direction of the confessor and the confessing. He gives rules to the sinner for examining his conscience. He exhorts the penitent to reject all shame which would hinder him from making a full confession of his sins, because, says he, there is no mercy without confession.—Vide de Adm Sacra Poem.

Another evidence, my Lord—no less a one than your own venerable Bede, dissecting on the unction of the sick. If, says he the sick be in sins, and if they confess them to the priests of the church, taking all possible care to amend their lives, and to give up sinning with their whole hearts, they shall be forgiven then. For sins cannot be forgiven without the confession that corrects them. Hence the Apostle says, "Confess your sins one to another; and pray ye one for the other, that you may be saved." Again he says, "As to our light sins, they may be forgiven by confessing them to our neighbours, and by their praying for us. But if we are stained with impurity or infected with a leprosy of great sins, we must according to the laws confess these to the priest, and we must perform the expiations according to his will, during the time, and in the manner which he shall command us"—Bede in c. 9, Ep. Jacobi.

Would you, my Lord, wish another witness against you? You may have him in the great Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury.—

"It is a horrible thing that those who should receive from the Holy Ghost a second birth, by a pure confession, allow themselves to be born again by the devil by violating charity by detraction. They accuse in confession others, and not themselves, believing that they cannot obtain pardon of their sins unless they name their accomplices." He vehemently condemns the pastor who would dare to violate the secrecy of confession, and dispenses the faithful from going to such. "In that case," says he, "if you cannot find a faithful priest, despair not, confess to God."—De Obl. Celand. Confessionem.

The great St. Anselm, Lanfranc's friend, companion, and successor, says, "No matter what contrition you have, discover faithfully to the priest, by an humble confession, all the spots of your interior leprosy, that you may be cleansed from them. As the lepers were going they were cleansed, because from the moment the sinner sets out for the priest he begins to practice justice, and the justice which he exercises is conducive to his purification. Notwithstanding, it is still necessary for him to go to the priest and demand absolution."

He forbids a confessor to use the knowledge he had by the confession of his penitent; even to prevent the same penitent from publicly approaching the altar of God, though he knew by confession his utter unworthiness.—The reason he assigns is, that by using such a knowledge he would not only excite horror in the breast of the penitent for confession, but also prevent other unhappy sinners from having recourse to the Confessional; thereby inducing themselves to conceal their sins and perish eternally, rather than reveal them to faithless priests.—Lib Epat, 56

Let me, my Lord, concluded the evidence against you, by introducing you to the ordinances of a few of your most celebrated kings, who begged to differ with you on the subject of confession, practised in the Catholic church, being dangerous to the civil government, and also to the celebrated council held in Kent in 787. They at any rate will stand in comparison with any of your non-confessing kings. Alfred the Great, and Gutturnus, ordained, in unison with the clergy of their days, that if any criminal wishes to have a priest to make his confession to, in this instance such a privilege should never be refused him—Cap. 8, E. L. Edward the son of Alfred confirmed this ordinance. "Si quis rei capitalis damnatus sua ingenue sacerdoti peccata confiteri cupiverit id ei conceditur"—Cap. 5, L. Ecl.—The canons enacted under King Edgar ordain that all persons going to confession should arm themselves with fortitude, and not be prevented by shame from confessing their faults, "because without confession there is no pardon to be hoped for, for it is confession that heals and it is confession that justifies." The council of Kent, one of the greatest that ever was celebrated in England, sanctioned by the presence of two legates from Pope Adrian I. in the 20th canon ordains that no person should approach to holy communion without having first submitted himself to the judgement of the priest. It furthermore ordains that "should any person die without penance, or without confession, such a person should not be prayed for after his death."—20th canon. This

canon was confirmed by another held shortly after in the kingdom of Mercia.

You see, my lord, that the councils and the lights of England, in the days of her pristine holy splendour, as well as your own modern canons and rubrics are against you. Infidelity, Church of Englandism, Catholic antiquity and piety, all testifying for us and against you; condemning you of wilful calumny or gross ignorance, of deliberate, or if not, of at least unjustifiable slander to blacken a clergy you are said to detest, a country you hate, and a people whom with the genius of your native land you ever abominated and would continue to enslave. It was not sufficient for you to wantonly assail our character; but even the holiest things of our religion you would not permit to escape the contamination of your approaches. With the rashness of a Sampson, without his inspiration, you would pull down the sacred pillars that supported your own country; and sustained not less the Irish people amidst contumelias, oppressions, and tribulations unknown on earth, that you might thereby crush if you could, the clergy of Ireland beneath the ruins. Think you, my lord, that the Irish people were it not for the patience with which they were inspired at that Confessional which you reprobate, or that hope that was there stirred up and kept alive within them—a hope looking beyond the sufferings of time to the glories of eternity—think you again, I ask, that they would have so long endured the fiendish tortures to which your legislatures subjected them? No, my lord. Were it not for that very Confessional, what secret sanatory you and others would sacrilegiously invade and violate, in reckless despair, they would have risen as one man and struck you to the earth with their fetters, or would have willingly perished in the attempt. You would, my lord, by the basest insinuations imply, that those murders which have occurred in a few localities of Ireland, and which, as Christians and clergymen we abhor, and abominate, were traceable to the Confessional, and yet, with insincerity peculiar to yourself, you have not the honesty to confess that the peace of general Ireland was principally owing to that chair of mercy. The Irish people, forsooth, according to you, go to confession, and the priest conceals their secret sins! Thank God, my lord, both priests and people, with the exception of a few nonconfessing murderers, do their duty in this respect, and I fondly hope they ever shall—for no matter what the neglect of it might be to Ireland, I know well what it would be to England. I have the experience of history, showing me what occurred when the sacred duty was despised or neglected elsewhere.

I have the honour, my Lord (Newspaper) Stanley, with all respect for your dignity, and with the sincerest Christian pity for the unseemly position which in an evil hour you occupied as the slanderer of a Christian priesthood, from whom you never received an injury, and of a holy institution, which, as an obedient son of the Church of England, you, would have venerated as divine and sacred, to be your most obedient humble servant,

✠ E. MAGINN,
Bishop of Orthosis and Apost. Adm. Derry.

- Births.**
- March 5—Mrs. Moriarty of a daughter.
 - " 5—Mrs. Donovan of a son.
 - " 6—Mrs. Devine of a daughter.
 - " 6—Mrs. Shea of a daughter.
 - " 6—Mrs. Mahar of a daughter.
 - " 8—Mrs. Nugent of a daughter.
 - " 8—Mrs. McGennis of a son.
 - " 8—Mrs. Cody of a son.
 - " 8—Mrs. Hayden of a son.
 - " 8—Mrs. Butler of a son.

- Married.**
- March 5—Mr. Jacob Conolly, to Miss Ann Carey, Mr. Stephen Carey, to Miss Margaret Healy.

- Died.**
- March 5—Patrick Cunningham, native of Waterford Ireland, aged 27 years. 8—Mr. John Rogers, native of Donegal Ireland, aged 64 years. 9—Mary wife of Michael Mahar, native Ireland, aged 62 years. 11—James Scully, native of Tipperary Ireland, aged 45 years.

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