

## PENANCE.

PROTESTANTS reject the Sacrament of Penance, and deny what they read expressed in the clearest terms in that very scripture which they profess to make their sole rule of faith, that Christ ever conferred on the pastors of his church the power of forgiving sins.

Yet in what terms more plain and positive could he declare that he conferred such a power upon them, than in the following, when, *breathing upon them, he said, receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*—John xx, 23.

Certain Protestants, particularly those of the church of England, finding this grant of the Saviour to his pastors too clearly announced to be roundly denied, contend, in order to do away with the humbling duty of confession, which it necessarily implies, that such power granted is fully exercised by their clergy, when they pronounce over their assembled hearers the general absolution, a set form of which is found in their *book of common prayer*. But can any thing be more grossly absurd than to suppose that one forgives what he has no knowledge of: or that one can absolve or condemn, he knows not whom, or for what?

When our Saviour declared the sins of the Paralytic forgiven, the Scribes and Pharisees "said within themselves: this man blasphemeth; who can forgive sins, but God. But Jesus seeing their thoughts, said unto them: why think ye evil in your hearts?"—Matt. viii: 2, 3, 4.—Yet they only thought, as Protestants do. And our Saviour works a miracle to prove that they were wrong. "That ye may know," said he, "that the Son of man on earth hath power to forgive sins; then said he to the man sick of the palsy, arise; take up thy bed, and go into thy house: and he arose and went into his house; and the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God, who had given such power to man."—Ibid.

This power, which he himself had, as man, he conferred, as we have seen above, upon his Apostles; declaring besides, that, *as the Father had sent him, so he sent them*. And to show the unlimited extent of their power, he prefaces his missive mandate to them with these words—*all power is given to me, in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore, &c.*—Matt. xxiii, 18.

In his prayer to his heavenly father, the night before he suffered, he expressed himself thus: *As thou Father, hast sent me into this world, I also have sent them into the world:—and the glory which thou hast given to me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as we also are one*. And to shew that his commission to them, with all its accompanying powers, was not to be limited to them; nor to their time; but was to descend through them to their rightful successors, he adds in the same prayer, *and not for these only do I pray; but for those also, who, through their word shall believe in me.*—John xvii, 18, &c.

Our Lord besides assures us that *he came not to abolish, but to fulfil the law*: adding, with his most solemn assevera-

tion, *Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle of the law shall not pass, till all be fulfilled*, Matt. v, 17, 18,—that is, till all the types and figurative allusions in the ceremonial observances of the old law find their full spiritual accomplishment in the new. Now one of these figurative allusions, and a most striking one, was *the law of the leprosy*.—Lev. xiii. That loathsome and infectious disease was thereby subjected, not to the inspection and prescriptions of the physicians, but of the priests, to shew that sin, the leprosy of the soul, should be thus subjected in the new law to the inspection and prescriptions of the Saviour's priesthood. Hence, in the only two instances recorded in the gospel of our Saviour's healing the leprosy, he commanded the lepers, applying to him for a cure, *to go, as the law directed, and shew themselves to the priest*—Matt. viii, 4—Luke xvii, 14—thus sanctioning the law in all its allusive meaning, and leaving the spiritual leper, applying to him for a cure, under the indispensable obligation, in will at least, and intention, where the opportunity is wanting, of exposing his leprosy to the priest, and abiding by his direction. Else, let the Protestant shew us why the Saviour thus made his cure of the leprosy conditional. Let him shew us also how the figure in question has been fulfilled *to the last jot or tittle*.

Besides, as every incident of our Saviour's life was by himself designed, and is recorded by his inspired writers for our instruction: for, according to St. Paul, *whatever is written, is written for our instruction*—Rom. xv, 4—in the *one leper*, whom he healed, in the conditional way just mentioned, we discover a figure of man in the abstract, or of human nature freed by him from the leprosy of sin, and, in the *ten lepers* who presented themselves at once before him, on another occasion, the ten possible cases of spiritual leprosy in the human race: or the *ten ways* by which we may become lepers in the spiritual sense, which we do by a breach of any of the *ten commandments*: all which cases he refers to the inspection and direction of his priests, as the indispensable condition on which he grants a cure.

To this humbling duty all, who have sinned, are subjected, from the monarch on the throne, to the lowliest of his subjects; from the first pastor in the church, to the last of the faithful.—Yet, if we consider the many advantages accruing to us from our exact compliance with this humiliating obligation, we shall find that he enjoined it more as a measure of mercy and love towards us, than of justice and punishment for our offences.

For, in the first place, it is a strong natural check put upon our sinful propensities. For who, knowing that he can never expect forgiveness from God for what grievous sins he commits, unless he first humbly confess them to his pastor, would not rather deny himself the proposed criminal gratification, than subject himself to the indispensable obligation of disclosing his guilt to his confessor, a fellow mortal?

The Protestant says he will confess his sins only to God. We are all bound to do so with humility and sorrow. But he knows our sinfulness better than we do ourselves. And however much the Protestant may boast his familiarity with his Maker, even after grievously offending him, he must own, after all, that the humble diffidence of the publican in the gospel, *who durst not so much as look up to heaven*, was more pleasing to God, than the proud, presuming assurance of the Pharisee. He dares often to do that in the presence of God, which he would not so readily do in the presence of man. The Catholic then, who knows his obligation of confessing his secret guilt to man, has one strong inducement to refrain from sin, which the Protestant is deprived of.

But the great object which the Saviour had in view in thus obliging us to expose the leprosy of our souls to his priests, was that the spiritual patients, by making known their spiritual ailments or diseases, might receive the proper advice and prescriptions from their spiritual physicians; for no doctor can prescribe, without knowing the disease, and the particular case, for which he prescribes.

The maladies of the soul are much more various, complicated, subtle and deceiving than those of the body; and hence require to be more carefully inspected by those, whose study and business it is to cure them.—Would a weekly lecture on medicine be thought sufficient prescription for all the possible cases of sickness in a community? It were most absurd to suppose so. And is it less absurd to suppose that a weekly discourse on moral and religious subjects, which is all the spiritual advice which protestants have, is sufficient prescription for all their spiritual complaints and ailments? It is quite impossible in such a discourse so to descend to particulars as to hit the case of every one; for the duties and dangers of each are different; nor is the comprehension of all alike. Some may not well understand; others cannot apply to themselves; most will not remember what has been generally spoken. And is this all that is necessary in a matter of such dread importance as our eternal salvation? No, surely: neither has the Saviour left the members of his church in such destitution of *the word of life*.—He brings it down to the ear; adapts it to the capacity, and circumstances; and impresses it on the heart and memory of all and each of his beloved followers. *His word* serves thus as a lamp to their feet, and a light to their steps; Ps. 18, enabling them to walk without stumbling in the path of righteousness; and to avoid the many snares and dangers laid in their way by their invisible enemies. But the children of darkness, as our Saviour says, hate the light; and come not to the light, that their works may be reproved. But, he who doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest; because they are done in God. John, iii. 20, 21.

A further advantage, afforded to the Catholic by confession, is the safe and easy means of making restitution to all, whom he has injured in their goods, or reputation; without which reparation of the in-

jury done by him to his neighbour, at least in as far as possible, he needs expect no forgiveness from God.

Yet, by making such reparation himself in person, he might compromise not only his own, but his family's honour: he might ruin his character for ever; expose himself to bodily risk, and even to capital punishment. Nor would it be much safer for him to trust with so delicate a secret the man, who has his matrimonial confidant. nor, indeed, any one, not tied down by all laws human and divine, to an inviolable secrecy; and whose character and office, should he undertake to perform so indispensable an act of justice, would put him above all suspicion of being himself the delinquent. Such a one as this is the Catholic priest; through whom restitutions are frequently made; and wrongs of every kind redressed. And, if such acts of justice are seldom, or never known to occur among Protestants; it is not because they are less addicted to dishonest practices, or unfair dealings; but because they have no account of such to render here on earth; nor such ready, safe and easy means of fulfilling their duty in this respect.

The obligation of confessing our sins even to our fellow creature man, is clearly inculcated by the Apostle, Saint James, in his Epistle, called *Catholic*, or *Universal*, because it was addressed, not to any particular congregation, but to the whole Universal Church. *Confess*, says he, *your sins to one another*; ch. 5, v. 16.—He never could have meant that we should confess them to every, or, any one indiscriminately; which, for one's honour and safety, prudence would forbid; to but those ordained, tried and lawfully appointed to be our spiritual directors.

The same wholesome practice of confessing our sins to God's priests was enjoined by God himself in the old laws: for he commanded Moses to speak thus to the children of Israel: *When any man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit; and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandments of the Lord; and offended: they shall confess their sins; and restore the principal itself, and the fifth part over and above to him, against whom they have sinned.* Num. 5, 67. Let Protestants now, who pretend to regulate their faith by scripture, shew us their scripture authority for denying the Sacrament of Penance.

We have just been informed that last week a Frenchman from Madawaska had occasion to go over to Fish River, which seems to be now considered as part of the "land of liberty."—Something it seems transpired to raise the ire of the soldiers of that post, who at once introduced the beautiful and summary mode of punishment by Lynch Law. They stripped and flogged him without the least vestige of a trial; thus amply proving the blessings of liberty that reigns so triumphantly in that enlightened land. Is not this a practical illustration of how appropriately and judiciously the National banner was adorned with "*Stripes*," so beautifully emblematic of that system over which it waves its folds? If British subjects are to be maltreated in this manner and the perpetrators escape with impunity, the sooner we know it the better.—*Woodstock, (N. B.) Telegraph*.