

A NEW FORM OF AURICULAR CONFESSION.

IT is needless for us to define the position of the DOMINION CHURCHMAN in regard to Confession. We stand within the bounds of the Church of England. We therefore condemn any practice which goes over these bounds by a hair's breadth, or which tends towards the creation of habits calculated to drive the person who acquires them across the lines of the Church's teaching and life. That the practice of auricular confession, as prescribed by the discipline of the Church of Rome, is distinctly contrary to the teaching of the Church of England, needs no argument here. We regard the habit, we say the habit, of Confession as mischievous, as well as a deadly and dangerous snare to the soul. Strange to say the extreme Low Church party have introduced a system which is practically Auricular Confession. The pill is pure popery, although coated with Puritan sugar.

The Puritan system, especially when practised in the Church of England, always has led to the enthralment of the mind, conscience and will of the laity by spiritual directors, as minute and absolute as that which the Romish priest exercises over the people in his charge. Without this enslavement, the bonds of party would be powerless. Those who desire to obtain and retain this control, invite the members of their flocks to hold private conferences with them on spiritual matters in the Vestry. Now there are circumstances in which such confidential meetings may be most useful. The Prayer Book tells us plainly what those circumstances are, and to what end counsel is sought, and the very terms used imply that they are rare and exceptional. But that is not the point, nor are such cases as the Prayer Book provides for, those which the new system alone seeks to meet. The invitation under the new system is general, the teaching from the pulpit is directed towards exciting a desire for these private and habitual conferences with a conscience keeper. Anxious, timid, sensitive souls are worked upon so that just as the Romanist is driven by fear to Confession, so the equally benighted member of our Church, by the pressure of spiritual forces he or she cannot resist, by the grinding oppression of party machinery, is driven to consult his or her spiritual Director, and to place his or her mind and conscience and will under his direct, personal control. The system is practically in result the Confessional of Rome. We cannot narrate the details of cases in these columns, but we know of many in which the most cruel wrong has been done to the reputation of young women, who are peculiarly exposed to this danger, by having been led into the habit of secret conferences with some pet denominational minister. Instances, in late years, are numerous, in England and the States, of grave scandals arising therefrom, which have utterly ruined the peace of families, and driven ministers who have adopted this Protestant form of Confessional into the deepest, most disgraceful ruin. The scandal connected with the

principal Nonconformist congregation in Toronto, which wrecked several families, and drove a minister of great gifts into exile and poverty, arose solely from the practice common to this religious body of practising private Confession in vestry rooms, as is being done by some of the younger clergy. The Romish Confessional is bad enough, but it has safeguards. The Protestant Confessional, introduced recently by the young clergy of the Wycliffe party, is an abomination, against which all sound Churchmen and Churchwomen should set their faces in uncompromising condemnation. That this thing of evil has been hatched under the wing of the extreme Puritan wing, is only another illustration of the law under which extremes breed extremes. The Girondist martyr exclaimed on her way to execution, "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name." So of the principles and practices of extreme Low Church partisans we may say that some of the worst evils of Popery, the subjugation of the individual mind, will and conscience to a director, the destruction of all spiritual personal freedom, arise naturally out of the very system which boasts of its extreme opposition to Romanism, to which it is practically so closely allied in results.

This law of extremes is worth the study of those who foolishly fancy that extreme Protestantism is the true safeguard against Romish error. Take a political illustration. The policy of Mr. Gladstone was 'peace at any price,' yet this policy has caused the most terrible loss of life and treasure and national prestige, while the policy he so vehemently condemned because of its warlike tendency, resulted in "peace with honour." But for the peace policy Gordon would have been rescued, Egypt pacified, and Russia kept at bay, and over one hundred million dollars saved, as well as the lives of our bravest soldiers. Take a social illustration. Prohibition wherever enforced has increased the evils it is intended to extinguish. Take an historic illustration. Puritanism sought to crush out all the gaiety of life, it resulted in an outburst of frivolity from which we are still suffering. Take a religious illustration. Mr. Moody's method is the extreme point of opposition to that of Rome, yet he receives private auricular Confessions, and gives absolution in his way, as though he were a priest of Rome. To affirm that extreme Protestantism is the safeguard against Romanism is false in fact and based upon a philosophical absurdity. We can judge what attention should be paid to those who have raised the cuckoo cry of "sacerdotalism" for the purposes of faction, when they who have screamed the loudest exercise their "sacerdotal" authority by inviting private auricular Confessions under circumstances almost indistinguishable from and for purposes absolutely identical with the Confessional of the Church of Rome. We trust Churchmen and Churchwomen will stand fast in the liberty of the Gospel, and resist all efforts to seduce them from their allegiance in this matter to the sound, wholesome, Scriptural and Catholic teaching of the Church of England, which, as Bishop Ken said, "stands

distinguished from all Papal and Puritan innovations."

ORGANIC CHRISTIAN UNITY.

WE desire in asking attention to the very interesting article below, especially to note the severe terms in which "undenominationalism," is condemned by a paper which is the leading organ of this modern craze.

"Have we even yet appreciated the words of prayer offered by our Lord: 'That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us: that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me?' In presence of the ecclesiastical condition of our age and time, do not these words suggest an imperious need, and call us to a new form of duty—the duty of aiming at the realization of an organic unity of our free ecclesiastical life? As we rise to a more perfect appreciation of the spirit of Christianity, we naturally sigh for union with all Christians; not that sentimental union which is illustrated on the platform of the Evangelical Alliance, but a real organic union for the development of a richer and more varied fellowship. Ecclesiasticism in its present expression is very largely hindering the complete realization of New Testament Christianity. The Latin type of Christianity is not union, but submission. The ability of un murmuring obedience is the chief virtue in a Romanist. Everything is forgiven but one thing—disobedience to the powers that be. Protestantism, both in England and America, is broken and divided, so much so that it is continually apologising for its internal strife, trying to make the world think that it comes of conscientiousness. But as the same plea was urged for all the persecutions of the middle ages, conscientiousness has to be tested as to its quality by being brought into that light which streams from the central Sun of Righteousness. The question we are obliged to ask in these days, and which ought to have been asked in all days, is not whether a man is conscientious, but whether he is a Christian. Our ecclesiasticism must submit itself to this test. If it cannot justify itself at that bar, at which not only all men but all systems must stand, it has no right to demand our allegiance. In England and America the most Christianised spirits in all Churches are sighing for unity, for organic co-operation in the work of the Lord. Denominationalism must kneel before the Master, and receive anew the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, before it can see its errors and turn from them. The Free Churches of England and the Protestant Churches of America must draw closer together, come together in conference, and remain together till they can move as an army moves, with a co-operative submission to the great Leader's commands. We are not ignorant of the fact that there is abroad a spirit of undenominationalism, but it is a spirit of disaffection and of disintegration, the most bitterly denominational of all things. It has been born too much out of self-will, not by the action of the Divine will upon the human will. Denominationalism seems for the present in