

Christian ministry. . . . The gift and the refusal of the gift are regarded in relation to classes, and not in relation to individuals." "It is impossible to contemplate an absolute individual exercise of the power of 'retaining.' So far it is contrary to the scope of the passage to see in it a direct authority to the absolute individual exercise of the remitting."

Also, it should be observed that the ignorant and indiscriminate abuse of auricular confession, which may be made in unscrupulous hands an instrument of the most intolerable and dangerous tyranny, is even more perilous in England than it is in the Church of Rome. For in the Church of Rome there is, I believe, some limitation put on the right to hear confessions. How are we to assume, in the face of fact, that all "priests" have that gift of "spiritual discernment," without which the pretence to absolve becomes not only baseless, but pernicious? But in the stress of unrestrained licence to which we have now been reduced and betrayed by supineness in the defence of truth, any silly youth who has barely scraped through a poll degree, and who may have shown in his ordination examination an incredible ignorance of the most elementary facts of Scripture, scholarship, and theology, thinks himself at liberty, as soon as he enters a parish, to pose as a confessor, and to tell men and women, whose very shoes he is not worthy to tie, that they are to come and kneel to him "as culprits before their judge." He will indeed find few—and none of any manliness and intelligence—to adopt such abject thralldom to one who may be immeasurably their inferior in the most elementary Christian graces; but he may do—as has been done a thousand times—quite infinite mischief to himself, and to weak and miserable souls. Not to dwell on his utter unfitness to dabble his unspiritual hands

"In the dark dissolving human heart
And hallowed secrets of this microcosm,"

such a youth, in his self-sufficiency and blindness, may hopelessly poison the peace of families; may subtly alienate the love of wives from their husbands; may sow discord between the daughter and her mother; may, in sheer incompetence, and without consciously wicked intentions, reduce the whole religious state of the silly and the impressionable to a chaos of hysteric falsities by teaching for doctrines the deceits of men. Bishop Wilberforce, all his life long an acknowledged leader of the High Church party, declared to his