

demands of morality might be let down to a standard, consistent with the easy going convenience of the most worldly-minded society. By the free use of the principles of probabilism, which authorized a penitent to quote the opinion of any reputable theologian in justification of a doubtful transaction, even though condemned alike by his own conscience and that of his confessor, they debauched conscience altogether. They thus brought it about that the ethical standard of the church, which during the first three centuries was greatly above that of the surrounding community, in the seventeenth century fell far below it. The instantaneous success of Pascal's exposure of their teaching on such enormities as secret compensation, mental reservation, and political assassination, showed how unfit they were to be regarded as the moral teachers of the world. Very many suppose that the teaching of the Jesuits on all these points is wholly different from that of the rest of the Roman Catholic casuists, but this is largely erroneous. It is true that some of their more extreme conclusions have been condemned by the church and they have been compelled to profess a somewhat stricter standard. But the truth is that their methods, principles and results are almost everywhere the same as those of other writers who have met with universal approval. Any difference on the part of the Jesuits is simply through their being more thoroughgoing and logical in the application of the recognized principles of the system. As a system of Christian ethics the casuistry provided for the confessional must be pronounced a failure.

Even its own most strenuous advocates are more or less conscious of that failure. An eminent Roman Catholic theologian once said to me, by way of excuse for defects of the system, that their Moral Theology was not a fair representation of the ethical teaching of the Roman Catholic church, being intended merely as a guide to the priests in dealing with the adjudication of cases in the court of the confessional, and therefore somewhat legal in its methods. The real ethical teaching of the church, he added, was to be found in their ascetic works. But inasmuch as the principles inculcated in these ascetic works are such as find their logical outcome in