

all those who, within the last three hundred years, have separated from the holy Catholic church. We believe that the ministers of Christ, those whom we call bishops and priests, have received the power of forgiving and retaining sins, which was given to the Apostles, according to St. John xx. 22, 23.

Pray, sir, is it superstition to believe, that our omnipotent and merciful God is able and as willing to continue that power in 1820, as he was to give it to his first ministers?

If we believe that man, by his own power, could forgive sin, you would be very justifiable in accusing us of superstition; for who can forgive sins but God, or he who has received that power from him.

We believe confession necessarily deducible from the grant of the above power. It cannot be conceived how a minister of Christ is to exercise his power of forgiving or retaining sins, unless he has in exact knowledge of the state of the sinner's conscience; this knowledge no one can give him but the sinner himself, as probably ninety-nine out of a hundred are sins concealed from the public eye, sins of thoughts or desires, &c.

The minister of Christ forgives in the name and by the power of Christ; he cannot grant absolution or forgiveness then, unless he has a moral certainty, that such is the inward state of the sinner, such his repentance, such his purpose of amendment, such his willingness to make restitution of property, character, &c. as to entitle him to the mercy of God, and to forgiveness from above.

The objections made against Confession, and the power of forgiving sins; are so futile, the benefits arising from that sacred institution so manifold and so solid, that it cannot be conceived how so many thousands were and are willing to be deprived of so valuable a blessing.

These benefits are so great, that even some of the most relentless enemies of the Church could not refuse their encomiums to that holy institution. "There is not, perhaps, a wiser institution," says Voltaire, "in his remarks on the Tragedy of Olympe. The lawmakers, who established mysteries and expiations, were equally studious to prevent the guilty from yielding to despair, and re-appearing into their crimes."

This Voltaire, the greatest enemy that the Church ever had, who spent his life in ridiculing the holy Scriptures, and all the institutions of Christ, who declared an open war against Christ; this Voltaire, at the age of eighty odd, when in his last sickness, sent for a priest to make his confession to him. "Confession is an excellent thing," says the Philosophical Dictionary, a curb to inveterate wickedness. In the remotest antiquity, Confession was practiced in the celebration of all the ancient mysteries, we have imitated and sanctified this wise practice; it is excellent to induce ulcerated hearts to forgive and to make thieves restore what they have unjustly taken from their neighbour." The Lutherans in the Confession of Augsburg, have preserved that salutary institution. Luther himself would not suffer it to be abolished. Sooner (say he) would I submit to the Papal tyranny, than let Confession be ab-

olished." Collection of Luther's German writings vol. ii. p. 272.

We find the precept of Confession given by Almighty God, to his chosen people.

"Say to the children of Israel; when a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall confess their sin, and restore the principal itself, and the fifth part over, and above." &c. Numb. v. 6, 7.

It does not appear that the power of forgiving sins had been granted by the Almighty God to the ministers of the old law. The Confession ordered to be made under the law of Moses, may then be considered as a preparation and a figure of that required under the law of grace, which we call Sacramental Confession, as by the power of God and the merits of Christ, it has the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation annexed to it.

We find the practice of Confession in the beginning of Christianity: "And many of those who believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds." Acts xix. 18.

We cannot believe that they came to boast of their good deeds; and therefore we understand that they confessed their bad deeds, commonly called sins.

All the holy fathers of the Church, from the earliest dawn of christianity, bear ample testimony to the general practice of Confession. It is difficult to conceive how any man could ever have persuaded mankind to submit to a practice, so repugnant to flesh and blood, so mortifying to pride, so humiliating to human nature. The universality of this practice, to which the most powerful kings and emperors, the most renowned military commanders, the most exalted geniuses, in all ages, and in all parts of the world, have cheerfully submitted, establishes in our minds a conviction beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Confession owes its origin to the founder of christianity.

The objections against sacramental Confession, I repeat it, are so futile, so trifling, as hardly to deserve any answer.

First objection.—How can man forgive sins?

I answer by the power of God.

I answer again, with our blessed Saviour,

"That you may know, that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," &c. Matt. ix. 6. He does not say, "That you may know, that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins;" to give us to understand that this power, essentially belonging to God alone, is here communicated to man the minister of God by excellence and exercised by him in his own person: and again exercised by him in the persons of the ministers, as he sends them most assuredly; to do what he did, to preach as he did, administer reconciliation as he did, &c. All power "is given to me in Heaven and in Earth." Why this preamble, if he did not mean to give a supernatural power? "Go ye, therefore," &c. &c. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. "And receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven," &c. John xx. 22, 23.

Second objection.—The institution of Confession is a great encouragement to sin, as Papists think they have nothing to do, in order to obtain forgiveness, but to relate their sins to a priest.

Answer.—The institution of Confession misrepresented, is an encouragement to sin—granted; but surely, sir, to form a sound judgment on Catholic doctrines, it is not to polluted sources you will apply, I do not know the Protestant writer who represents them fairly; yet, it is beyond all doubt, that almost all the knowledge which Protestants have of Catholic principles, is derived from Protestant books. And pray, what do they all say? Beware of Catholic books, beware of Popish priests, beware of priest-craft, beware of Popish superstition; thus, not one Protestant out of a hundred, ever had an opportunity of knowing the genuine Catholic principles.—As Fletcher very justly observes, the little knowledge which the Protestants possess of our religion, is borrowed entirely from the declamations of pulpit violence, and misrepresentation of interested prejudice. In general, Catholic principles are exhibited in all the dark colorings of malevolence, and in all the ludicrous shapes of low ribaldry. In Dryden's words:

"A hideous figure of their foes they draw;

"Nor lines; nor looks, nor shades, nor colours true;

"And this grotesque design expose to public view—

"And yet the daubing pleases!"

To return to the second objection—I say, that Confession, far from being an encouragement to sin, is the greatest check, and the greatest remedy against sin.

It is in Confession that the sinner discovers to the minister of Christ, the physician of his soul, all his spiritual maladies, his weaknesses, his temptations, his inclinations, his doubts, the scruples of his conscience his apprehensions, &c. and it is there he finds comfort, encouragement, advice, instructions, remedies against temptations, in short, every thing that is necessary to cause him to forsake the ways of perdition, and with the prodigal son to return to his father; it is there sir, he is told of his obligations—it is there he is made sensible of the impossibility of obtaining forgiveness unless he restores what he has got by stealing, cheating, usury, or by any kind of injustice, unless he is reconciled with his adversary, unless he forsakes the occasion of sin. It is there he is reminded of the vanity of earthly pleasures, of the shortness of time, of the dreadful punishments prepared for sinners by the infinite justice of God and of the incomprehensible blessings which the mercy of God has prepared for his saints. It is there, that in the most pathetic strains, the minister of Christ exhorts the sinner to sincere repentance and exhibits before his eyes, the merits and the sacred wounds of his dying Saviour, to rouse the confidence of the desponding sinner. Ah sir, is this encouragement to sin? Is this superstition? Great God! your wrath must have been provoked to a very high degree, by the abominable sins committed on this polluted earth, when you permitted so many thousands of sinners to be deprived of so valuable a blessing, as that derived from Sacramental Confession.