

ripped from the Book of Daniel. Pius X. (according to the new Daniel come to judgment) is to be positively the last Pope. The same was said of Pius VII. when the First Napoleon carried him away a prisoner to Fontainebleau. But Pius VII. stayed long enough in France to see the end of Napoleon's power. The same prediction went out on the four winds of heaven when word flashed over the wires that Pius IX. had shuffled off his mortal coil. And those of our readers that live long enough will hear the forecast restated for other Popes until their ears become deaf to sounds of earth and their eyes drop the shutters till the crack o' doom. The 'positively last appearance' of the Pope upon the world's stage will come to pass only when mankind vanishes off our planet, and the heavens shall depart as a scroll rolled up. The Pope dies. The papacy lives on—drinking in perpetual youth from the great Fount of living water above. Those toilsome prophecies merely give expression to a hope and wish. They have a happy knack of ever ganging a-gley, and furnish a fresh illustration of the truth of Twain's saying that this sort of prophecy may be a good line of business, but it is full of risks.

THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

(BY HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON.)

(Concluded from last week.)

II.

Again, the Church is necessary to morality as the support of conscience. How so? By the Sacrament of Penance, by confession. Confession is the indispensable support of conscience. It is often assailed to-day. Some attacks against it proceed, as Louis Veuillot used to say, from such putridity that no decent man would even look at them. There is, however, one which is more specious. 'Moral reform is not difficult for Catholics,' say our adversaries, 'they can indulge in all sorts of profligacy, degradation, and crime; all they have to do is to confess them to a priest, and lo! they are forgiven, white-washed, regenerated—a most commodious proceeding!'

For the moment we need not examine whether they who make this charge are qualified to do so, whether they themselves do not give a loose rein to many a shameful passion, palming it off as a weakness, a necessity, a natural instinct, and whether they do not absolve themselves far more easily than Catholics who frequent confession. We take up the attack as formulated without attenuation, and repel it. Verily, if confession were what they think and fancy, it would be commodious beyond measure. But confession as practised by Catholics is quite another affair, and supposes vastly different conditions. What are they? First, a serious examination of conscience. That is an act at once profoundly human and profoundly useful; the very heathens used to ascribe perfection to the knowledge of self. And, indeed, the man who never descends into himself, who never reads his soul, who never examines his conscience, is like the senseless spendthrift who would fling handfuls of gold about, regardless of his expenditure or the state of his fortune. Whatever the extent of his wealth, he would soon be beggared and ruined. Joseph de Maistre used to say, 'I know the conscience of only one decent man, and it is frightful.' True, even in the best of souls there is a great fund of baseness and perversity, which escapes inattentive eyes, and shows all its ugliness only in the scrutiny of examination, like the minute grains of dust which the sunbeam detects in what is deemed pure air. Thus you readily perceive the support given to conscience by the examination of conscience—the preliminary obligation of confession. Nor is this all. After examination comes confession. Confession is an accusation made to a man, who indeed is the representative of God, but yet a man. It is not a confidential communication made in bravado or profligacy to a friend; it is an accusation, and we know by experience the vast distance separating such a confidential communication from a humble and painful confession—so painful that some persons, despite their Catholic faith, cannot bring themselves to make it. Who does not see the moral greatness of such a

voluntary accusation, which is already a partial reparation, and the beginning of regeneration? We say partial; for it is not enough to confess, we must also detest our sins; our accusation must come from the heart, not merely from the lips. In that detestation and hearty contrition not only the sin, but the joy, the remembrance, the thought, the desire of the sin must be included. The mere statement of sins to the ear of the priest is not sufficient.

The Church goes further still; she requires reparation. Ill-gotten goods must be restored; our neighbour's ruined reputation repaired; injury done to him made good; evil bonds broken, proximate danger of relapse avoided, no matter what inconvenience or trouble all this may involve.

Such is the work of the Church by confession. Is it not right, therefore, to say that the Church by confession is the support of conscience? How many persons allured by passion were on the brink of falling when they were arrested by the idea of confession! How many more were fallen when raised up again by confession! And how great often is their joy and gladness; for confession has its pleasant as well as its painful sides.

Furthermore, the Church is indispensable to morality as the source of sanctity. Christianity means the imitation of Christ, now Christ was holiness itself, perfection infinite. That being so, we proceed to our demonstration. You are doubtless aware of the lamentable state of the world at the time when the Church was founded; the heathen world was verily the city of the demon, made to his own image, the abode of all vices, in which he reigned supreme. Well, one day twelve poor men, uncultured, without prestige, portioned out the world and spread themselves throughout the whole Roman Empire, nay, to the ends of the earth. They announced the advent of a God made man, born in a stable and died on a cross. Their preaching arrested the decadence of the world, which seemed beyond remedy, and men began to practise in every land justice, benignity, meekness, equality, and love. Whence arose this change? Whence came this marvellous transformation, this conversion? First of all, no doubt, from the grace of God; but also from the holiness of the heralds, who preached their Master by example and word. They were listened to and followed, because they were unlike other men, because they reproduced the virtues of Jesus, because they could all say with St. Paul: 'Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ.' To that egotistic world they could preach detachment, because they possessed no private property; they could preach meekness, because they invariably rendered good for evil; they could preach humility, because they deemed themselves unworthy instruments of their Master, Jesus; they could preach chastity, because they had left their homes and given up all lawful family joys in order to follow that Saviour; they could preach that the body is but a servant to be kept under, that men are on earth mainly to prepare themselves for eternity, that we must at all costs save our souls, and gladly endure imprisonment, torture, scourging, shipwreck, insults, and martyrdom for the salvation of our brethren and for God's sake.

They taught the world morality, they transformed the world by their sanctity, they gave such an impulse to goodness that, if this progress was arrested in the course of ages by the malice of men, or the jealousy of demons, these interruptions were but momentary.

Besides, in every age the Church produced other saints, who imparted to mankind a greater moral vigor, and were the leaven to elevate the masses. There, for instance, is a man who has become the slave of his passions, a confirmed voluptuary; he at length feels his degradation and misery. He looks at the life of the saints who have gone before him, those men, those women, those mere boys and girls, and he cries out: 'Why cannot I do what they have done?'—'Quod isti et istae, cur non ego?' Encouraged by these examples, he bursts the bonds of sin, he becomes the great St. Augustine. Other examples innumerable could be given, for sanctity begets sanctity.

Not only do the saints form other saints, but they kindle in other souls less generous than they, yet noble and good, the same fire of perfection. Alongside of heroic sanctity so hard to reach, there is ordinary holiness, yet still an ideal elevated and highly meritorious which consists in the observance of the commandments, and in the practice of the virtues required by Christianity, justice, purity, the love of one's neighbor even to the forgiveness of injuries and the love of our enemies, the love of God ready for any sacrifice sooner than to offend Him grievously.

"A LIGHT purse makes a heavy heart." Buy Cock o' the North, and save your siller!

"A E grid turn deserves anither." You are delighted with Cock o' the North; then tell your friends.