
DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S TREATISE OF CONFESSION,
WHETHER THE POPE HAVE POWER
TO ENJOIN SAME.

PART THIRD.

69. I. I regard' secret confession, as well as virginity and celibacy, as a very precious and salutary thing. Truly, all Christians ought to regret it very much if there were no secret confession, and they ought to thank God with all their heart that it is permitted and given us. But here lies the fault: the pope makes a corral of it and hedges it about with laws, treating it just as he does chastity. It is his nature invariably to despise and disregard everything that God has commanded. On the other hand, he frames laws concerning things which God has not commanded or merely advised us to do. Thus he exalts himself above God and demands more than God, true to his

nature as the Antichrist, who must be occupied in doing something in the Church in opposition to God. And if there were no other indication that he is the real Antichrist, this one thing, which everyone comprehends, would be enough, *viz.*, that he in all countries disregards God's laws and enforces only his own laws. And it cannot excuse him to say that it is not his fault that other men are wicked.

70. If he is able to urge the observance of his laws, why is he not able to do likewise in regard to God's law? Or as he sets aside God's laws, why does he not set aside his own? Of course, his laws bring money, honor, and pleasure, while God's laws bring poverty, dishonor, and tribulation. But if it is too much for him to enforce God's laws in all countries, why does he undertake the task, forbidding, at the same time, other men to do it? Nay, more, why does he not enforce God's laws at his own court and in his own household? Alas, everything that pertains to the pope and to popery is falsehood and deception from head to foot.

71. II. As our first proof we cite the dictum found in the legend of St. John the Evangelist: *Non placent Deo coacta servitia, i. e.*, God takes no pleasure in forced or unwilling service. And even if the legend did not say this, it is in entire accord with Scripture. St. Paul (2 Cor. 9, 7) uses gentle words, he does not wish to command, but to advise. At last he says: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." And to his disciple Philemon [8. 14]: "Though I might be much bold to enjoin thee, I would do nothing without thy mind, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity but willingly."

72. Thus also Christ says (John 14, 23. 24): "If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." For this reason the Christians are called the free or the willing (Ps. 110, 3): "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." And St. Peter (1 Pet. 2, 16): "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of malicious-

ness, but as the servants of God." Similarly Christ says (John 8, 35): "And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever." The reason is this: the son serves willingly, the servant unwillingly. This also is the intent of God's Law when He says (Matt. 22, 27, citing from Deut. 6, 5): "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," etc.

73. III. As a second proof in this matter we must note the distinction, that the Word of God is of three kinds. First, there are laws commanding us what we ought to do and must do in order to be saved. Secondly, we have well-meant counsel and good advice which we need not follow in order to be saved, but rest in our own free will, as, for instance, the celibacy of virgins and widows. Another example: If anyone desires to be a bishop, that is, a preacher of the Word of God, and to give his life to this work, as Isaiah did when God said (Is. 6, 8): "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he answered, "Here am I; send me." Of this St. Paul says (1 Tim. 3, 1): "If a man desire the office of a bishop," that is, to preach divine truth, "he desireth a good work;" for he will incur the enmity of the whole world.

74. But the bishops that govern now are not real bishops, but like painted and wooden bishops. For not one of them performs a bishop's duty and work, that is, preaching; I am not speaking of any kind of preaching, but of preaching the Word of God. For this reason they are a mass of corruption, the devil's own, though they were to perform miracles. The third part consists of divine promises and assurances, in which He demands nothing, but merely offers His hand, His gracious help and consolation, etc. Command, advice, and promise — these three parts and their distinction we must carefully note.

75. IV. Now consider: Although He demands the observance of His laws and requires it of every one, still He takes no pleasure in those who observe them reluctantly, under compulsion, or fear of pain, and not freely and willingly; as the First Psalm [v. 2] says: "Blessed is the man whose will rests

in the Law of God" (Vulgate). It does not say: Blessed is he whose hand, foot, or mouth is in the Law,—for all this may be without his heart or will. Now if He does not wish to see His Law kept with reluctance or under compulsion, how much less will it please Him, if men are compelled to accept His advice and promises, which He does not require!

76. It is far more tolerable that men are compelled to observe His laws than that they be compelled to accept His advice and promises. Take an example: If a rich man obligated himself and promised to give unto all needy persons on a certain day a fine dress, which, however, would be of no use to anyone else except that needy person; if they refused it, and you fool, with your kind intentions, thought you could help matters by urging and compelling them to accept it, though you knew that they would not keep it, but would throw it aside, what sort of a service do you think, you miserable wiscacre, you would be doing to the rich man whom you so foolishly wished to aid in wasting his substance? He would regard you as insane or as his greatest enemy; for the saying is true: We cannot give things to a person against his will, but we can take them away from him without his consent.

77. V. Behold, you senseless, raging pope, this is just what you do, together with your sect, as the worst enemies of God. For private confession is an open treasury of grace wherein God presents and offers His mercy and forgiveness of all sins; it is a blessed, rich promise of God by which no one is forced or urged, but everyone is invited and called. And yet, you rudely blunder along with your abomination, compelling all men to take these treasures, though you know that as yet they are not desirous of them, do not accept them, and do not keep them. In doing this, do you not make a fool of God? He is to squander His blessings by reason of your commands; you bring before Him a multitude of men to whom He is to give, and there is no one with any desire towards Him.

78. O what an abuse of these high and precious blessings do you provoke, you miserable pope! I am justified in saying

that there is no more sinful and accursed day in the year than the day of Easter. If all the year were a carnival, and if people danced and drank every day, they would not commit so many and great sins as are now committed in the holiest time of Lent and especially in the holy week and at Easter-time. Thus everything is inverted: what we call the holiest time is the most unholy; this is no one's fault except the pope's with his mad, impious, hellish, devilish laws.

79. VI. All those who confess and go to the Sacrament unwillingly and do not desire it sincerely, would be better off if they had meanwhile committed a grave, public sin. They dishonor God's mercy and make a jest of it. Now there are very few that would come to the Sacrament from their own devotional frame of mind and desire, if the pope, that senseless apostle of the devil, did not compel them with his laws. Thus sins are multiplied to a shocking degree in all the world on the authority of the pope, and he is guilty of all sins committed in this respect, so that Paul has well said 2 Thess. 2, 3 that he is "the man of sin and a son of perdition;" for he accumulates everywhere sin and perdition against Christ, who is a man of grace and a son of salvation, because He has prepared grace and salvation in all the world. Therefore He is called Christ, and the pope, Antichrist, which means "against Christ," one that does preposterous things in the name of Christ, whose vice-regent he boasts to be.

80. Behold, this is the interpretation of those awful prophecies in which it is foretold how the bishops and priests would give the holy Sacrament to the swine and brute animals, Matt. 7, 6. Do you take this to mean that they are given to real swine? No, it means swinish hearts that have no longing for the Sacrament and still love sin and are forced to receive the Sacrament and to confess against their will and consent. These are the swine before which the pope and the papists cast our high treasures and the consolation of the sacraments, that our hearts ought to burst into a thousand pieces whenever we think of the detestable pope, the arch-sinner and arch-seducer.

81. VII. But you say: If private confession were abolished, there would be many wicked people that now are restrained by the confession; and confession is looked upon as a yearly reformation of Christendom. Great Heavens, alas the reformation! Do you really think, dear friend, that that can be called becoming pious, when unwilling men are compelled to come to God's Sacrament? If we could save all men, still we ought not thus to spill the divine sacraments before one man. Indeed, if piety consisted in going to the altar, you could make even a sow or a dog pious. Verily, he that is willing and eager needs no law; he that is unwilling and reluctant is helped by no law or compulsion, but is only made worse.

82. Here the pope's office and diligence ought to exercise itself in making people willing and eager, then there would be no need of a law. But now he saves himself that trouble and procures for himself, and his friends an easy time of it. He thinks he can bring it about by laws, and such a foolish law that it is a special visitation from the Lord, that human reason has allowed itself to be so blinded that it did not perceive the incongruity of its wording. He commands all Christians, male and female (perhaps he feared there might be Christians that were neither male nor female), when they have reached the years of discretion, that they once a year confess all their sins to their own priest; whosoever fails to do this is not to be buried in the churchyard. God have mercy upon us, how terrible is the punishment of the most holy father! What would become of me if I were not buried in the churchyard with Christ and all the apostles and martyrs? Perhaps the roof of the church might not shed its water on my grave. What a calamity! May God blast you rogues! How dare you exalt that which is so utterly of no importance, causing the people to open their mouths with your rotten buffoonery.

83. VIII. And then these two little words: "all his sins" and "to his own priest." Help Heavens, what misery they have created, how have they stumbled over them, how have they driven the wretched consciences to do the impossible thing of

confessing all sins! What a sea-wide stream of books has **this** one word *omnium* called forth! If the Holy Spirit had uttered it, it would have become obsolete long ago, as all His words have become obsolete; but since the pope, prompted by the devil, has uttered it, it soars aloft and tortures all the world. Thus by virtue of this noble law even the young and innocent children must confess, if they wish to remain male or female; otherwise he might mutilate them according to this severe law that begins *omnis*, "all," none excepted, although they have nothing to confess.

84. Moreover, what misery has arisen between the priests and the mendicant orders on account of the words *proprio sacerdoti* [to his own priest]! Short of murdering each other there has been nothing lacking of hatred, envy, poison, anger, cursing, quarreling, discord, and offenses. What a beautiful spectacle that has been for the devil in times past! He thought, I have given them a proper law, I have put the words as I wished to have them. Thus they quarrel to this very day as to who is *proprius sacerdos*, whether priest or chaplain or church-warden or beguine; but still we must confess! Behold, that is a piece of the reformation that results from this law.

85. IX. Therefore the pope and his followers should regard this as their work: to rise up, to preach by word of mouth, and to show unto the people the danger and harm of sin, and the judgment of God. At the same time they should exalt and praise the sacrament of divine grace and preach this unceasingly, and thus deter the people from sin and kindly invite them to the sacraments, so that considering their harm and their benefit they might be moved and come willingly. Then they would love God and rightly understand their own depravity and God's grace; that would give us true Christians.

86. Thus confession ought to remain free for every one, and its usefulness, together with sin's harmfulness, ought to be preached. Whosoever then would come, would come; and whosoever would not come, would remain away. Likewise I would advise and laud virginity and celibacy; but I would leave it

free and force no one to renounce matrimony. Similarly, I would preach faith and baptism; but I would compel no man, though accepting all that came willingly. In the same manner I would preach the grace of the Sacrament of the Altar, but would leave it free, forcing no one. Thus I would laud confession most highly (and truly, no one can laud it enough), but would drive nobody. Lo, this would be the office of the pope and the bishops, a spiritual office; thus the apostles have done and the fathers. You may be sure, what men soever you do not bring to confession by these means you will not bring to it profitably with laws and compulsion; and the reason of it I shall show you bluntly.

87. X. In the first place, we have that harm which has already been touched upon. If anyone goes to confession unwillingly and with a coerced heart, God's Word and promise is spilt in vain; just as if you were to pour good malmsey wine into a keg filled with dregs to the top. For divine grace seeks and demands empty, hungry, eager, thirsty, and longing hearts, as Mary sings [Luke 1, 53]: "He hath filled the hungry with good things." Therefore he cannot confess without harm that comes to confession merely on account of the law and compulsion and (as they say) out of obedience to the Church, and not from a desire and longing for grace.

88. Accordingly, my earnest advice is: Let each man examine himself why he would go to confession. If he does so on account of the law, and if his heart does not strive and sigh for the help of divine grace, let him remain away, let him not allow himself to be swayed by the pope and his laws, until he feels himself to be hungry and eager for divine help, and until he becomes heartily opposed to sin. God is pleased if we approach Him. Again He is displeased and punishes it dreadfully. He is pleased, if we heartily desire help and mercy; He is displeased, if it be done under compulsion and law, without desire for help. But now it is to be feared that very few confess during Lent from such a desire. For if they confessed from a desire for help, they would do so also at other times

besides Lent without laws, giving no heed to Lent, law, time, or place. But the fact that they do not, and would even prefer to disregard Lent, is a sign that they confess coerced by the law of the pope. This is nothing else than to allow one's self to be driven into all manner of misfortune.

89. XI. Secondly, we have the same misfortunes that result from all other man-given laws; they are three in number. The first is an unwarranted evil conscience; the second is an unwarranted good conscience; the third is idolatry. You ask how that may be? Let me tell you. If you regard yourself as bound to observe man-made laws, your conscience is already ensnared. For if you transgress, your conscience tells you at once that you have sinned, although such is not the case. For as the law is wrong, so is your conscience wrong. And you are in the predicament (as the saying goes) of being afraid of your own eyeballs. For if you firmly believe that there is a wolf behind the stove, although he is not there, still for you he is there inasmuch as you act and feel as though he were there.

90. Behold, everything that the pope does in the world is like unto a scarecrow and a spook, for he merely cheats Christian consciences with his vain, popish laws. For instance, if you hold it a sin not to fast on an apostle's eve, it is surely a sin. Not because it is a sin in truth, for God has not commanded it, but because you and your conscience regard it as a sin. Thus God judges you according to your conscience; for as you believe, so you are dealt with by God. This (evil) conscience and sin is not derived from God, but from the senseless scarecrow of popish laws; which, if you recognized it as being nothing,—and in truth it is nothing in and by itself,—there would be no sin, whether you fast or eat. If you are afraid of the dummy in the hemp, it will devour you; if you fear it not, it will not harm you. Lo, thus the pope plays with our poor consciences and our dire perdition as though it were the spook of children that can be frightened with dummies and scarecrows; and yet he claims to be the most holy father and Christ's vice-regent. This, I think, is called feeding the sheep of Christ.

91. XII. This is a part of the unwarranted evil conscience. Again, if you believe that you do well in the eyes of God, by observing His laws, and if you purpose to become pious thereby and to gather a store of merit, you have an unwarranted good conscience and your faith is corrupt. You fare like the man in a dream of whom Isaiah writes [ch. 29, 8]: he imagines that he is eating and drinking, and when he awakens, he is still empty and hungry. Thus, you see, the pope and his followers are preachers of dreams; he cheats our consciences into believing that there is righteousness; and there is no more back of it than if some one persuaded you that counters are good Rhenish florins.

92. This is the greatest juggler that has appeared on earth, and by means of this pernicious jugglery in such serious matters the evil spirit through the pope insolently vents and gratifies his long-gathered hatred against poor Christendom. If he gave his laws so as not to bind the consciences, and permitted that any one who wished might freely observe them, there would be no danger. But he demands that they be observed no less than God's laws. And our consciences are to be so ordered that they who observe them are to be regarded as pious in the eyes of God. Thus faith (which alone justifies in the eyes of God and creates a good conscience) is trodden under foot, and in its place a false, visionary, juggled conscience is produced; this is the devil himself with all his iniquity and falsehood. Therefore the pope's polity is a childish affair, for children are frightened with vain mummeries, and allured by counters.

93. XIII. As the result of this we have idolatry. Namely, if you have such a misguided conscience in regard to your fictitious sins and righteousness, your heart no longer rests confidently on God's grace, but puts a presumptuous trust in your good works. This presumption raises up within you the idol of your own good works taught by the pope and his law. In these you put that trust which you ought to put alone in God. For if you did not put your trust in them, you would not thus

submit to them or cling to them, but would walk as a free man, observing and disregarding them as you pleased.

94. Thus the pope is the idol of all the world, as Paul says (2 Thess. 2, 4): "He opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped" (*Germ.*: above all words and service of God). Faith is genuine service of God; this he destroys, and substitutes in their stead the works of his law, so that our conscience may depend on his law and not on faith. Behold, for this reason God did not wish to have His own law fulfilled except by faith, that is, by a confident trust in His divine grace, in order that not the works of His law might become our idol and teach us presumption, but that His grace alone and He Himself might be our presumption, defiance, and consolation; this is having real divine service and God. From this you may gather why Paul calls the pope (v. 3) "a man of sin, a son of perdition," for he caused the world to be filled with misguided consciences, corrupting the faith and filling all hearts with idolatry.

95. XIV. Now, you see, the same holds true in regard to confession and sacrament. If you do not confess during Lent, as the pope commands, you believe it a sin, although it is not. But if you confess, you believe that you have done well and have thereby become justified in the sight of God as an obedient child, and this also is false. Who causes you to have this belief and misguided conscience? Is it not the pope and his law? For if the law did not exist, you would not have this belief and conscience. But this belief cannot coexist with Christian faith, which is not founded on our works, but upon Christ's works, and which firmly holds that man be justified because Christ has done everything, and that our works henceforth are merely the free result and fruit of this faith and righteousness.

96. Therefore, again, my earnest advice is that a Christian should not confess during Lent and at Easter nor go to the Sacrament, and should think: Lo! because a man, the pope, has commanded it; I will not for that very reason do it;

and if he had not commanded it, I would do it; but I shall do it some other time when he has not commanded it, at such a time and in such a manner as my free desire and devotional frame of mind shall urge me. And this I will do in order that I may not accustom myself to man-made laws and be afraid of them, or learn to confide and trust in them, whereby my faith and trust in God's grace would be wounded.

97. But if you do wish to confess and receive the Sacrament at that time, be sure to exact this condition of yourself, that you do it not because you are forced to it by the laws of the pope or coerced by your misguided conscience, but from your own free will for the good and welfare of your soul; and that you regard his law no higher than the dung on the street. I say by my soul, unless a man thus free his conscience from the hellish tyrant, the pope, he cannot without injury to his faith observe such senseless laws. I do not prevent people from observing them, but I wish to observe them with a free conscience, without believing that thereby I become either pious or impious, no more so than if I, as a favor to the pope, would put my hand upon my head, or do anything else in which conscience is not concerned.

98. XV. You may say: How shall we restrain sin? I answer: How is it restrained now? Does confession help matters? Look about you, how many mend their ways after Easter, and yet all must confess. All this confessing is specious and a pretense without any results, and, as Solomon says [Prov. 25, 14]: Great clouds and wind without rain.

99. There are two ways of restraining sin. The first is, by the secular power. Here we have gallows, wheels, fire, and such other things as are necessary in order to obtain safety from public malefactors. The other is spiritual, and was instituted by Christ, Matt. 18, 15—20, where we read as follows: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he

shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

100. O that this passage were not in the Gospel, what a boon it would be for the pope! For here Christ gives the keys unto the entire Church, and not unto St. Peter. And relevant to this same matter are the verses, Matt. 16, 18, 19, where He gives the keys to St. Peter, instead of the entire Church. For in this 18th chapter the Lord gives His own commentary as to whom He had given the keys in the person of Peter in chapter 16. They are given unto all Christians, and not to St. Peter personally. This, too, is the proper interpretation of the passage mentioned above (John 20, 22, 23): "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here are three passages of one and the same import, in which Christ has instituted the Christian order of rebuking sins, so that the pope's law is neither necessary nor useful.

101. XVI. According to this order the proper procedure is as follows: In every parish or congregation a person that has committed a public sin is to be admonished as a brother by his neighbor; thereafter he is to be admonished properly in the presence of several witnesses; finally he is to be produced, accused, and convicted publicly in the church during the service, after the reading of the gospel, before the minister, the congregation, and everyone. If he is then willing to reform, they are to pray for him with one accord, as here the Lord teaches us and promises to hear us. If he refuses, he is to be expelled from the congregation, and no one is to associate with him. This is what the Lord here calls "to be bound." And this is

properly excommunication. This method was observed by the apostles and, for a long time after them, by the bishops, until that abomination at Rome raised its head and trod it all together with the entire Gospel under foot.

102. Therefore, now our bishops sit like dunces and jack-anapes, as Zechariah describes them (ch. 10, 2; 11, 17), and see publicly and everywhere taverns in which all manner of vices, cursing, lewdness, murder, and misery is in vogue; there are common brothels, there sit public usurers and adulterers, there they see such extreme extravagance in dress, that it cannot be described: in short, all the world and all classes of men notoriously live without any restraint. And what do they do? They ride beautiful horses, wear cloth of gold, maintain courts like princes, or if they are perfectly pious, they celebrate mass and pray their seven *horas*.

103. But all those sins they encourage with inactivity, nay, more, they increase the number of holidays, in order that by all means many sins may be committed through their aid. And still these miserable men claim to be bishops, and undertake to restore matters by reading *horas*, by celebrating masses, and by creating religious establishments, and then pretend that it has been accomplished through private confession. Mad, mad, mad, every one! Of what avail is it if a bishop read a hundred thousand masses a day? What would it amount to if he endowed all the churches in the world, if he, at the same time, neglected this ordinance of Christ and permitted it to disappear? He has been appointed as bishop and pastor in order to restrain sin and to use this ordinance of Christ. Of course, if it were a tax with which to plunder the poor people, the ban would be applied even where there is no sin. Woe, woe unto all bishops and spiritual superiors!

104. XVII. And now note that, if this Christian ordinance were enforced, we should also find Christians where we now find merely nominal Christians and the veriest heathen; much sin and occasion of sin would be avoided; there would be little or no need of secret confession. But since we despise Christ's ordinance and lay all stress upon our own little human

contrivances and turn public confession into private confession, it is small wonder that Christ deserts us and gives us over to our own devices as is now the case, God-a-mercy! Of course, it would cost trouble and labor, and a bishop could not govern two cities, to say nothing of the pope's governing the entire world. Therefore the devil has taught them to retain the title and appearance of the episcopal office while ridding themselves of its duties, to take things easy, to fix the matter in written laws and commands, so that each one might urge himself to a pious life.

105. Our squires and spiritual lords must rule the world, must read their rent-rolls, must preserve and increase the possessions of the church. These poor overworked men have much to do in attending to their pomp and gluttony, so that Christ's ordinance cannot accommodate itself to their ways. Therefore, let things fare as they may, they are, nevertheless, bishops, even as the painted saints in the churches are saints. Consequently, all sin and disorder in the world is the fault of no one except the bishops and the pope, and they must bear them as their own sins, so that I fear lest God have given over him whom He now makes a bishop as the devil's own. But never mind, they neither hear nor believe, they must experience it themselves. Would to God that they experienced it alone!

106. XVIII. Now let us treat of private confession and teach how we may use it profitably. And in the first place, if you do not wish with a free heart to confess your secret sins, postpone it until you find yourself in a proper devotional frame of mind; you are not bound by the pope's laws. Otherwise you come to the Sacrament to the dire hurt of your souls, for on account of this reluctance you are not fit for the Sacrament. But confess to God with David (Ps. 32, 5): "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid."

107. In this manner all saints in the Old Testament and later, till the legislation of the pope, were obliged to confess, even as David in the same Psalm adds to the verses just quoted

and says: "For these (sins) shall everyone that is godly" (that is, all men living in the justification of faith) "pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found," that is, when you feel yourself guilty and become conscious of your sins. If, now, the saints were saved by confessing their sins privately to God without revealing them to their priests, how dare anyone presume to deny salvation to him who has not confessed all his sins to his pastor? How dare he impose such hard burdens without any scriptural warrant, merely out of presumption? Let it suffice that we praise and love and gladly grant this confession, but let us not call those men heretics, and give them over to the devil, that desire to confess some secret sin to God alone and not to men. For if we undertake to condemn a man as a heretic, we are bound to show him a clear verse of Scripture against which he has sinned and refuses to heed admonishment, a thing we cannot do in regard to secret confession.

108. XIX. But there are two reasons why we should willingly and gladly confess. The first reason is the holy cross, that is, the shame and mortification that a man willingly reveal himself to another person and accuse and deride himself. This is a precious part of the holy cross (which we are to take upon ourselves). Oh, if we knew what punishments are prevented by such voluntary blushes, and how graciously it inclines God towards us when we in His honor annihilate and humble ourselves, we would dig confession out of the earth and go a thousand miles for it.

109. All Scriptures bear testimony how gracious and friendly God is towards the humble. Now humility is nothing else than a willingness to efface and scorn ourselves. But no one can show contrition except by laying bare his sins. Humility in dress and demeanor is nothing. I also hope that since the shedding of the blood of Christian martyrs has ceased and because the Christian Church cannot be without martyrs, that God may have used the pope instead of the pagan emperors in order to plague and crucify His saints by means of these laws; and that He may have placed the pope's tyranny and impiety to the credit of those that have borne and suffered it

willingly. But probably there have been few of them, just as there have been few martyrs. The larger number has probably been ruined by these tyrants, because they knew not how to use them, regarding their laws a good, and not suffering them as a violence and an outrage, whereby their conscience was bound, reluctant though it was.

110. XX. It does not, however, excuse the pope that anyone makes good use of his wickedness. For the fact that St. Augustine became more learned and better through the controversies of the heretics did not help the heretics any; nor were those improved thereby that were led astray by these heretics. That the martyrs, as Christ, made good use of the persecutions of the Jews, the emperors, and the pagans, does not redound to the profit and praise of the persecutors; neither have they been profited who renounced their faith and thus failed to use those persecutions profitably.

111. Thus to those who have been willing to debase themselves in the confession the pope's tyranny has been a useful persecution leading them to humility, to grace, and to salvation; but to the others it has been a fearful occasion for sin and destruction. And the same is true even now: whosoever is disposed to humiliate and efface himself is not harmed by the law of the pope: he does not do it to serve the pope, but to serve God. But to those that do it reluctantly and for the pope's sake it is harmful and pernicious.

112. Therefore let us torture ourselves while we have time, and expunge our sins with little labor and in a short time. No fasting, no prayer, no indulgence, no pilgrimage, no suffering is as profitable as this voluntary disgrace and shame whereby man thoroughly effaces and humiliates himself, that is, becomes capable of grace. Would to God that it were customary to confess all secret sins publicly before all men, as Augustine did. O God, how quickly we should become men filled with grace—a condition we cannot attain to now, be our life ever so strict.

Fort Wayne, Ind.

W. H. KRUSE.

(To be concluded.)