

APOLOGY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE JESUITS

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Title Page

APOLOGY
FOR THE DOCTRINE
OF THE JESUITS

*SENT TO HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF ARRAS ON THE OCCASION OF HIS CENSURE OF THE BOOK
OF A GERMAN CASUIST*
AT LIÈGE

At Daniel Moumal's, Bookseller, near the Church of St. Lambert
1704

Letter from a Doctor of ***

To a Jesuit of the Gallo-Belgian Province

MY REVEREND FATHER

In reply to the letter with which you did me the honor of writing to me concerning the censure of Gobat's book by His Lordship of Arras, I shall tell you, as a friend, first, that the propositions as they are reported in the censure are not tenable, nor even excusable for the most part. Secondly, supposing it is judged appropriate in your parts to publish some writing in order to defend yourselves, it must contain nothing offensive against the Prelate; and should you address it to him himself, it cannot be too respectful. The note signed by the bookseller of Douai which you sent me appears essential to your justification. In it he declares that Gobat's book was not reprinted in the Diocese of Arras, but at Cologne; that it was neither on the advice nor at the solicitation of the Jesuits that he entered into partnership with the German printer; that he does not believe they had knowledge of this new edition otherwise than through the distribution he made of it; and that he is ready to maintain this testimony before anyone. This shows that His Lordship of Arras was misled when he was made to understand that this book had recently been reprinted in his Diocese; and yet this fact seems to be the principal motive of his censure. If you had foreseen this new thunderbolt, I am persuaded that by such a clarification you would have prevented it from falling upon you, at least with so much éclat, and that your Bishop's equity would not have permitted him, on the occasion of the work of a German written thirty or forty years ago, and in which you had no part, to load you with the infamous names of corrupters of morals, persecutors of Bishops, enemies who ravage the portion of the Lord's inheritance, and above all to accuse you of preparing within his Diocese a refuge for the wicked doctrine exterminated in France, so as to make it reappear one day. Perhaps he would have exercised his zeal against the German Jesuit without attacking you; as one sees in fact that he adopts an altogether different conduct toward the French Jesuits of his Diocese from that which he adopts toward the Flemings, and that he honors the former with his good will at the very time when he gives the latter such great marks of his indignation. It is unfortunate for you that he should have allowed himself to be so badly prejudiced; but after all, this makes me think that, had he been better informed concerning this particular fact, he would have done you greater justice. What you propose to me, informing the world of the origin of the misfortune you have had of falling into this Prelate's disfavor, might have a good effect. People would be edified to learn that it was because you had not wished to condemn this proposition of a Dominican, that absolution ought not to be refused or deferred *propter relapsus praecise* [solely because of relapse]. This Thesis appears Catholic to me, and the contrary opinion has with reason appeared dangerous to you. Thus, given the notion people have of the rivalry alleged to exist between the Dominicans and the Jesuits, they would be persuaded that the love of truth alone had prevented you from condemning the Thesis. The approval which the Universities of Louvain and Douai have since given it would be very favorable to you; but it would be a very delicate matter to touch this chord, and I should fear that this means of defense would bear too much the appearance of reproach and insult, which you must above all avoid. The respect owed to dignity must constitute for inferiors a weighty reason not always to make use of all their advantages; and this same reason must perhaps prevent you from descending into the detail of all the affairs that have been stirred up against you since this unfortunate Thesis. In a word, I would rather

suffer everything patiently than depart in any manner from the bounds of moderation and respect. Here is an expedient that occurred to me and that some very wise persons and friends of yours have found good. It would be that, after having declared that you in no way approve the opinions contained in the censured propositions, as I know you do not in fact approve them; after having declared that you leave to the German Casuist's compatriots the task of examining whether some of them can be defended, whether the extracts of the others are faithful, and whether what follows or precedes does not modify them; it would be, I say, that you address yourselves to His Lordship of Arras himself, not in order to refute his censure, for if you had such an object before your eyes when writing, I should fear that you would not be sufficiently masters of your resentment, but in order to offer him, in general, an Apology for the doctrine of your Society. He is your Pastor; and neither he nor anyone else can find fault with your rendering to him an account of your opinions and those of the Body to which you belong. Or, if you prefer, in this Apology you could simply explain your doctrine without addressing the Prelate. This subject would be less embarrassing for you and would exempt you from the greatest difficulty you would encounter in a work of this nature, in which it would be necessary so carefully to measure your discourse when speaking to His Lordship of Arras that there should not be one expression or one word of which he could complain. I incline more to this course for that reason; and I advise you to take it without even making any other writings on the matters of the censure, or on the intentions with which it was published, or on those who are known to have induced the Prelate to it. The sole end at which you ought to aim is to regain his good graces by your moderation and your respect. I would therefore set forth in this kind of Apology only the conduct your Society has always observed in its manner of teaching, the principles it has followed, the precautions it has taken to maintain sound doctrine in its Schools, the malicious and unjust procedure which its enemies have employed to discredit it in this matter, and the disposition in which it is, and in which it has always been, to follow in Moral Theology the rules of the Church and to condemn everything that this Mother of the faithful condemns. He has enough uprightness perhaps to relinquish his prejudices upon reading such an exposition. You act wisely in despising an infinity of writings published against you; but concerning some that may have greater effect, I have often thought that the plan of which I speak ought to be executed, and that you should make such a declaration to the public once and for all. For it is always necessary to begin again: you have obstinate adversaries who, on every occasion and upon the slightest incident, renew without wearying themselves and without fear of wearying the world all their former calumnies; and if it were necessary to answer everything, there would not be enough writers in the Society, extensive as it is, to do so. The occasion presented to you by the censure of M. of Arras, in which this Prelate treats you in so strange a manner, seems a natural one to me. Everyone will agree that you are being compelled to defend yourselves; and when it is seen that you do so without offending him himself, everyone will be edified by it. Once more, I believe that you ought to take this course. The matter is urgent, because people make a point of spreading everywhere the Censure of M. of Arras, in order to stir up against you persons who are poorly informed or already ill disposed. I am, etc.

Reply to the Preceding Letter

I have greatly appreciated, Sir, the counsel you gave me, and I have followed it both in the substance of the work and in its manner. I have circulated some manuscript copies of it, and I send you one. Although I composed this writing of my own initiative, I do not believe that I shall be disavowed with respect to the doctrine it contains and the propositions I advance in it. I am, with respect and gratitude, etc.

Apology for the Doctrine of the Jesuits

APOLOGY

FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE JESUITS

SENT TO HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF ARRAS ON THE OCCASION OF HIS CENSURE OF THE BOOK OF A GERMAN CASUIST

The alleged lax moral teaching of the Jesuits is the most plausible means that the Innovators and their other enemies have employed to discredit them and to estrange upright persons from them. This means has often succeeded for them. Many persons, judging the sincerity of others by their own, cannot persuade themselves that anyone would wish to defame an entire Society by reproaches which, if supposed false, would be atrocious and horrible calumnies.

With this prepossession, they enter blindly into the sentiments of those who speak ill of the Jesuits, and even join themselves to them, believing that they earn merit before God by assisting a zeal whose sole aim, it seems, is to arrest the course of a pernicious doctrine, by discrediting everywhere those who pass for its authors. It is thus that the prejudgment forms and imperceptibly increases, until it passes into the minds of many as a constant truth against which the accused can no longer be admitted to justify themselves.

But if these persons, either a little better instructed or a little more attentive, wished, before pronouncing so decided a judgment in a matter of this importance, to consult the rules of prudence and charity more than they do, I believe that the scruple of a rash judgment might arise in their conscience. I am persuaded that they would at least suspend for some time the sentence which they pronounce without hesitation against an entire Society, which has perhaps rendered some services to them themselves, and which, constantly for more than a century, has served the Church in every part of the world with some success and with some advantage to Religion.

Would it then be possible, say these persons, whose intentions are often very upright, would it be possible that so many people of every rank, of every condition, and of the holiest professions should all be calumniators; or that, without knowledge of the cause, they should every day carry themselves away, in public and in private, into cruel invectives against a body that was innocent of the frightful excesses with which they reproach it? But let them permit me to ask them in turn whether they can easily persuade themselves that a Society such as that of the Jesuits is only a collection of villains and abominable persons. For there is no middle ground here; and if they are such as they are depicted in the libels published against them, they must be regarded as monsters within Christianity.

In vain do their most declared enemies, through an affected moderation, sometimes contrast the regularity of this Society with the detestable doctrine they attribute to it. *They live well*, says one of their most venomous adversaries, *but they teach badly*. This contrast is a chimera. To live well and to undertake to ruin the doctrine of the Gospel throughout the earth by a detestable Moral Theology are two things that cannot be reconciled. It has indeed been seen at various times that certain leaders of a heretical party constantly maintained, in order to gain followers, the appearance of a severe virtue. But a Society as extensive as that of the Jesuits, which preserved the integrity of morals for more than

a century while applying itself to corrupting them among Christians throughout the earth, would be a prodigy without example and beyond probability.

It is in no way natural to reserve severity for oneself while teaching laxity to others. The contrary happens every day to several of those who appear most animated against this alleged corrupted Moral Theology of the Jesuits. The world is witness to it. Worldly though it is, it is scandalized by it and makes sport of it. Many upright persons groan over it. But after all, judging things by the lights of good sense, it will always be less surprising to see Rigorism preached by those who live in laxity than it would be to see laxity preached by those who practice Rigorism. It is easy to do the first, and it is very much the fashion in the time in which we live. There is no attraction in the second. One gains nothing thereby either on God's side or on the world's. It would be to damn oneself at great cost, without being able to reimburse oneself for anything; it would be to enter hell by the narrow gate. Such a project was never in accordance with the ideas of self-love, and, to have conceived it, the Jesuits would all have to be different from the rest of mankind.

This presumption alone appears decisive to many persons in the subject at issue; but I do not wish to avail myself of it to the point of making it the sole proof of the Jesuits' innocence in defending them against the execrable undertaking imputed to them, of undertaking to ruin everywhere the Moral Teaching of Jesus Christ. What I intend solely is thereby to put all equitable persons who might be prejudiced in a better state to judge soundly of so important a fact, to engage them to suspend for a moment their judgment between the two parties, and to dispose them to receive, with a spirit of charity and equity, the declaration I shall make in the name of the Society of Jesus on the point of Moral Theology. It is for the same end that I am going to add some reflections on the occasion and the origin of the accusations made against it in this matter, and on the means that have been used to support them and to render them plausible to an infinity of persons to whom their atrocity alone had at first rendered them incredible.

Until the time of Baius and Jansenius, the Jesuits were in possession of the reputation of persons perfectly orthodox in matters of Faith and Moral Theology. They could produce on this subject the praises which the Sovereign Pontiffs have so many times bestowed upon their Society, and in particular upon several of their principal Doctors. The heretics of France, England, and Germany could further serve them as witnesses in this regard. According to these Protestant Doctors, to attack the doctrine of the Jesuits was to attack that of the Roman Church. At that time the reproaches of laxity and semipelagianism were common to the Society of Jesus and to the congregation of the faithful. It was a very great honor to this Society to see itself, together with the Church, the object of the calumnies and persecutions of heretics; and nothing contributed more to increasing the esteem and affection that true Catholics had for the Jesuits.

But as soon as the Theologians of this Society had risen up against the innovations of Baius, had denounced them to the Sovereign Pontiffs, and had obtained their condemnation - and much more still when the errors of Jansenius had been anathematized by the Church - then the supporters of this heresy and all the partisans of Jansenius suddenly turned against the Jesuits and began, more than ever, to take them to task.

This was a stratagem to cause the public to mistake the issue. These Innovators were continually pressed hard concerning the fact of Jansenius, over which they persisted in their revolt against the Church and against the Ordinances of the King. To be ceaselessly on the defensive was for them a

disadvantageous and very inconvenient course. This, therefore, is again what determined them to attack the Jesuits and to bring suit against them concerning their alleged corrupted Moral Theology.

Then appeared that fine System of the policy of the Jesuits, who have among themselves, it was said, two sorts of Directors: severe Directors and accommodating Directors; the one sort to attract persons of virtue, the other so as not to repel sinners - an infallible means of making themselves masters of every conscience, a secret of the Society which no one until then had penetrated, and whose use turned upon the doctrine of probable opinions.

Since this was a pure counteraccusation to which all the Author's wit, whatever efforts he might make, could give no plausibility, this idea at first amused many more persons than it persuaded. It even scandalized several who believed that raillery could not be permitted in a subject of this nature. Nevertheless they continued; and, by making various extracts from the books of the Society - some faithful, some unfaithful, some capable of shocking the ordinary run of people who do not examine matters deeply, although there was nothing in them but what was orthodox - they succeeded in giving some color to what had at first appeared a pure chimera.

They did not stop there; and those whom the condemnation of the doctrine of Jansenius had consternated, profiting from the impression that these first attempts had made against the Jesuits, took courage again. They stirred up on every side, especially in Flanders and in France, in every Town and even in the countryside, persons who began, in rivalry with one another, to cry out against the corrupted Moral Theology of the Jesuits. Nothing was seen but libels scattered everywhere, but persons who, dispersed throughout all assemblies and private companies, let themselves loose against the Jesuits. The pulpits of truth, destined to preach charity to the peoples, became in several places theaters of the most venomous calumny. Mechanisms were set in motion to bring into this plot entire bodies of Ecclesiastics from the most considerable cities of the Kingdom. The diversity and multiplicity of the Jesuits' employments, and the blessings God bestows upon them therein, having at all times raised up many jealous rivals against them, they saw new adversaries rise against them in the Universities and in several religious orders.

One individual of their Society was perhaps the person who caused them the greatest harm in this persecution. In defiance of his Provincial, he caused a Book entitled *Apology for the Casuists* to appear, in which, taking his position very imprudently upon several particular cases, he drew upon himself the just censure of several Prelates. They did not fail to make all the Jesuits answerable for a work which the wisest and most learned among them were themselves the very first to detest and which was authentically disavowed. Everywhere this book and these censures were used to confirm the idea of the Jesuits' Moral Theology which the partisans of Jansenius were spreading everywhere. The libels most filled with falsehoods and the grossest calumnies were received with applause and found credence everywhere. The Apologies of these Fathers, however solid they were, were scarcely regarded and produced hardly any other effect than to give occasion for replies even more insulting and calumnious than the first works written against them. All the censures of Rome which branded most of these libels were mocked, and no more account was made of the Decrees of the King's Council which condemned them to the fire.

But at last the storm was calmed with time. Composure returned after this violent and impetuous fire. Wise persons for the most part soon perceived that passion and cabal had more part in this persecution than true zeal. Those who knew the Jesuits, or who until then had entrusted to them the

direction of their conscience, bore witness to themselves that the Moral Theology of these Fathers was not such as it was depicted in the satires published against them. The Parish Priests of Paris and Rouen, who had made the greatest noise, came back for the most part and were sorry to have seconded, contrary to their intention, the passion of a party whose evil designs they recognized.

The greater part of the Prelates of France and Flanders have shown since that time, by the conduct they have maintained toward the Jesuits, that they did not have of their doctrine the ideas which people had endeavored to give them; and they have often borne witness that they had no persons in their Dioceses who labored for the spiritual good of the peoples with more usefulness, more edification, more disinterestedness, and more submission to their Orders.

The most distinguished persons in the Kingdom did not recognize them in the frightful portraits made of them: the intercourse they had had with them; the education that several had received from them; the conduct of those among these Fathers whom their employment obliged sometimes to appear at Court, where, whatever care one takes to dissemble, one is soon known for what one is; their constant application in their most arduous functions; their zeal for the most dangerous Missions - all these ideas, which calumny had not yet been able to efface, rendered the most violent efforts of their Adversaries almost useless.

The Lords of the Court, the Magistrates, and the Nobility of all the Provinces were seen to entrust their children, as before, to these Fathers, to raise them in Letters and in the fear of God, and to render them the honorable testimony that nowhere were the two better united. Their College of Paris, despite all contrary intrigues, did not cease to be as it were the Seminary of all the most distinguished children in the Kingdom. Several of those who were the least attached to them followed the example of the others in this regard, themselves contributing, as if in spite of themselves, to justify them by their own conduct; and everyone agreed that this was the most solid Apology that could be made in their favor against the continual and horrible satires of their enemies.

Notwithstanding all this, the agitations have recommenced for some time past more vigorously than ever; and the Jesuits were often warned that a new storm was forming against them. In fact, severe blows have been dealt them during the last few years. They have tried to parry some of them. They have done so with equal force and modesty; and they have had the consolation of seeing that equitable and well-informed persons have always rendered them justice against Adversaries who do not become discouraged, and who are as constant in the persecution they have stirred up against them as in their revolt against the Church.

Nevertheless, neither do I wish to draw advantage for the defense of this Society from this new presumption furnished me by the character of most of those who for fifty years have made so harsh a war upon it, while they secretly prepare other devices against the Church itself. The sole use I intend to make of it, as also of the first, is to prevent people from relying too readily upon witnesses who must be so suspect, and upon certain others whom they have prejudiced by their artifices and by the clamor they have deliberately raised on every side; and to obtain from those who will read this defense some attention to what I am going to say in what follows.

Conduct Observed by the Jesuits in Matters of Moral Doctrine

All Christian Moral Theology can be reduced to two articles. The first comprises what is expressly contained in Scripture, in Tradition, in the Commandments of God and of the Church, in the Councils, and in the Decisions of the Holy See. The second contains an infinity of other cases which are not evidently decided by these first Rules and concerning which, for this reason, there is division among the Doctors in the Schools. One may further include in this number the explanation sometimes given to the Commandments of God or to Scripture, on the occasion of certain particular difficulties which arise in the dealings that men have with one another and which concern the extent of their duties, whether toward God, toward their neighbor, or toward themselves.

I do not believe that the Jesuits need an Apology on the first article; and I think they will not be reproached with ever having taught that adulteries, robberies on the highways, blasphemies, and other similar sins are permitted. It is true that they have been accused of having permitted Idolatry in China; but they have always said that Idolatry was a crime, and the question was reduced to knowing whether what they permitted was actually Idolatry.

It is therefore only the second article that is at issue, that is, things which are not evidently contained in the rules of our Faith, concerning which it is claimed that they always fall into laxity. Here are some propositions whose examination will clarify the truth or falsity of this accusation.

FIRST PROPOSITION

The Jesuits, in matters of Moral Theology, have always followed, in conformity with one of their Rules, the common opinions of the Catholic Schools.

If this proposition is true, it alone suffices to place the doctrine of this Society beyond all suspicion. Now it is a fact which the Jesuits boldly advance: that what ought to be regarded as the doctrine of their Society has always been a doctrine common in the Catholic Universities.

Since this proposition is the solid foundation upon which the justification and conduct of the Jesuits in matters of doctrine must be supported, it is appropriate to apprehend it well and explain it well, so that it may not be believed that, in a proposition too general and capable of having various senses, they are preparing evasions for themselves in order to elude the reproaches their adversaries make against them.

First, this does not mean that the Society of Jesus has a determinate opinion on each point of Theology which is also the general opinion of all the Schools and all the Catholic Universities. That could not be, because upon an infinity of questions opinions are divided there. But in this very division the opposed opinions are often equally common, and it is said of both the one and the other that they are a common doctrine in the School, because the affirmative and the negative are maintained indifferently.

When, therefore, the Jesuits say that their Society has always professed to follow the doctrine commonly received in the Schools and in the Catholic Universities, this means that in each question of Theology it has always kept to the opinions which were current in the School, and which were ordinarily followed there by the Catholic Doctors.

Second, when the Jesuits advance that the doctrine of their Society has always been the common doctrine of the Schools and Catholic Universities, they do not mean that no individual member of their body has ever departed from it, nor that none of their Theologians has ever maintained any proposition worthy of being reproved and censured. They are far from either thinking it or saying it. That would be to give themselves a praise which befits only Holy Scripture and the Church inspired by the Holy Spirit. There is within Christianity neither School nor University several of whose Doctors have not been subject to these weaknesses and these wanderings of the human mind. The Body of the holy Fathers itself, the most respectable body in the Church, is not exempt from this stain. Saint Augustine, saint though he is, has propositions of lax Moral Theology; some could be shown in Saint Jerome and in several other Fathers. And the Jesuits have no difficulty in making such an admission with regard to some of their Theologians. But what they advance without fear, and of which they are ready to furnish the proof, is that the doctrine received and authorized in their Society, that which is commonly followed there, is the same as that which they found was taught in the other Catholic Schools and Universities when they entered them, and that they can no more than the others be reproached for having departed from it.

Here, then, is a means altogether suited to the purpose and a very just rule for determining the truth or falsity of the reproach of lax Moral Theology made against the Jesuits. Has anything been commonly taught in their Society other than what has been commonly taught in the Catholic Schools and Universities? If a difference can be shown in this respect between their School and the other Catholic Schools, condemnation must be pronounced against them; if it cannot be shown, from that moment they are justified.

Some particular cases may be produced in which some of their Theologians have been mistaken; the same will be produced from the other Societies, and I dare advance that a greater number will be produced. Since these mistakes of certain individuals do not take from the other bodies the quality of being orthodox in the matter of Moral Theology, what injustice would it be if they caused the Society of Jesus alone to lose it? Here, then, once again, is the fixed point upon which everything must turn in this matter.

Let the adversaries of the Jesuits attack them on this point and press them as vigorously as they can. They must necessarily make an opening in them at this point; otherwise, it will always be the most manifest injustice to wish to distinguish them from all the other Societies by the shameful character of laxity in Moral Theology.

I add some other propositions which will serve to develop further the general proposition I have just made.

SECOND PROPOSITION

When a Jesuit Theologian has adopted some particular opinion rejected as bad in the Catholic Schools, the greater part of the Theologians of the Society have been against it; and, generally speaking, this Theologian has been neither the only nor the first of the Theologians to have departed on that point. I shall later descend into some detail which may serve as proof of this proposition. The Jesuits again boldly expose it to the criticism of their most vigorous adversaries: let them only take care to apprehend it correctly. But if this fact is true, if, when it is advanced by the Jesuits, it is left without its falsity being shown, calumny is disarmed, and the truth of the fundamental proposition I

made at the outset is perfectly established: that the doctrine of the Society, that is, the doctrine authorized by the common sentiment of the Jesuits, is the same as that of the other Catholic Schools; and that, consequently, it is wrong to affect to establish a kind of opposition between the doctrine of the Jesuits and that of the other Catholic Doctors.

THIRD PROPOSITION

When some opinion has been condemned by the Church or by the Holy See, by whatever authority it had previously found itself supported, there is no Society whose superiors have taken greater care than the superiors of the Jesuits have done to ensure that it was not taught in their Schools; and it has scarcely happened that any individual has done so, and has done so with impunity.

This proposition is likewise submitted to the examination of those who will be willing to take the trouble to make it, provided that, as has sometimes happened, they do not go and make the Popes say things they have not said, and that they keep precisely to their censure, without extending it according to their caprice and following their own fixed notions.

To these three points in justification of the conduct of the Jesuits in matters of doctrine, upon which they consent to be put to the severest test, I do not see very well what could be opposed, unless perhaps that, for them, it is not a sufficient means of justification to have followed the common doctrine received in the Catholic Schools, because this very doctrine, common though it is, is a lax doctrine.

It will no doubt not be for the Jesuits to reply to such an answer, all the more because in this very proposition they win their cause on the capital point. For the essential part of the injustice done to them, and that which must be most keenly felt by them, is that people affect to distinguish them from all the others and to regard their Theology as the sole source of corrupted Moral Theology. Now, this answer being supposed, they are merged into the crowd. Here are the School of Saint Thomas, that of Scotus, that of the Sorbonne, and all the other Catholic Universities placed in the same rank. It will no longer be said that lax Moral Theology and the Moral Theology of the Jesuits are the same thing. They will no longer be made solely answerable for the laxity of Christians. They came after the others, and it is a misfortune for them to have drawn from sources already poisoned; and they will no longer need anything but a reform which will be common to them with all the Doctors who until now have passed for Catholics. But these are among those paradoxes in which the character of the Innovating spirit appears too visibly for them to need to be refuted.

The Jesuits do not intend to stop here with these general justifications, however solid they may be. They wish to make an authentic declaration of the sentiments of their Society upon certain particular points concerning which calumny has most cruelly outraged them. They wish to make known to the whole Church that they take, as one of the rules of their doctrine, the condemnation of that great number of propositions in matters of cases of conscience pronounced by Popes Alexander VII, Innocent XI, and Alexander VIII. Moreover, they maintain that none of these condemned propositions has ever been the doctrine of their Society; that most have never been taught by any of their authors; that those which have been taught by some, as it has happened that several other non-Jesuit Theologians maintained them, they disavow; that since the Briefs of the Popes they have always watched to ensure that they were no longer taught in their Schools; and that they are resolved to do in this regard what they have always constantly done since their Society was established,

namely, to yield to no Ecclesiastical body in the submission they owe to the Orders of the Church and of him who is its visible head upon earth.

Since in these latter times the Calumniators of the Jesuits have principally insisted against them upon three points which have great extent in Moral Theology - upon the precept of the love of God, upon philosophical sin, and upon probable opinions - it is upon these matters that these Fathers have judged that they ought more particularly to inform the public of their true sentiments, as will be done in the continuation of this writing; and that they could do so upon all the other points by the same rules and with equal solidity.

Sentiments of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus on the Precept of the Love of God

The occasion of the reproach made against the Jesuits, that they release men from the obligation of loving God, and the foundation of all the invectives that have been made and are still made every day on this subject against their Society, was a book entitled *The Defense of Virtue*. The author of this book was a Jesuit named Antoine Sirmond, who is not the famous Sirmond, so well known and so esteemed by learned men, without excepting even those of the heretical party. This one was a very obscure man; but everything is dug up when it is a question of causing trouble for the Jesuits.

The design of the Author in this treatise on the defense of virtue is to examine whether it is permitted to act through fear, or through hope, or through some motive other than that of the pure love of God. And there he combats the error condemned by the Popes and renewed by the Innovators, who maintain that every action that does not have the motive of charity for its principle is a sin.

In order to disentangle this matter, and to make more clearly seen the difference between the sentiment of this Author and that of his Society, from which he departed, it is necessary to make in a few words some observations on this subject, observations that were already made some years ago in another Work. [In the *Reply to the Provincial Letters*.]

First, there has never been a Theologian who absolutely denied that we had a precept of loving God, the observance of which was necessary for salvation. But after making, in order better to clarify matters, the distinction of various kinds of precepts in this matter, the Doctors find themselves divided on some points.

They say that this precept is at the same time a general precept and a particular precept. It may be regarded as a general precept, because it is impossible to fulfill its entire extent without observing all the other commandments, not one of which can be violated without destroying charity. It is regarded as a particular or special precept because it commands the acts of one certain virtue in particular, that is to say, acts of love, which in their species are altogether different from the acts of the other virtues by which the other precepts are observed.

Thirdly, the precept of charity is negative and affirmative. A precept is called negative when it is considered with respect to the things which it forbids one to do. It is called affirmative when it is considered with respect to the things which it commands one to accomplish. Thus the precept of the love of God is negative insofar as it forbids hating the sovereign good; which is understood not only of formal hatred, which is scarcely anything but the sin of the devil, but also of every other sin, because every sin contains an estrangement from God. This precept is affirmative insofar as it commands us on certain occasions to make acts of the love of God: for example, at the hour of death, and, according to the Thomists, at the time when, upon leaving childhood, we begin to know ourselves and to make use of our reason, which represents God to us as our last end.

Moreover, the Theologians teach that a precept can oblige either of itself or accidentally; these are the terms they use, *per se*, *per accidens*. It obliges of itself when, independently of every other precept, it commands me to make an act of the particular virtue to which it relates. Thus the precept of charity

will oblige me of itself if, independently of every other precept, it obliges me to make acts of the love of God. A precept obliges me accidentally when I have to discharge some duty or to repel some temptation, and when the one or the other cannot be done without an act commanded by that precept. Thus, finding myself in some circumstance obliged by the precept of penance to make an act of perfect contrition, the precept of charity obliges me on that occasion accidentally, because, the act of contrition being nothing but a detestation of sin from the motive of the love of God, I cannot fulfill the precept of penance without making an act of the love of God.

Finally, all the Theologians agree that there is a precept of loving God; that this precept is negative, because it contains the prohibition against doing anything against God, and that it is also affirmative, because it obliges us to certain duties. Moreover, they agree that this precept is general and extends to the observance of all the other commandments; that there is also a special one which obliges at least accidentally, as in the case of the necessity of contrition and in some others. All the Theologians agree on all these points, and Father Antoine Sirmond agrees with them throughout the Treatise in question. Nor was it on this that he was accused; but, in accusing him of something else, it was concealed that he had even taught this, which alone would suffice greatly to diminish the horror that people endeavor to spread over his entire doctrine. The sole question that can therefore be asked here with respect to the doctrine of this Theologian in particular is to know whether, supposing all these other obligations upon which everyone agrees, this precept, insofar as it is special and affirmative, obliges us, in addition, not only accidentally but of itself, to make formal acts of love, by which one says to God: My God, I love you with all my heart.

The sentiment of this Doctor is that there is a precept of effective love which obliges one to observe all the other commandments under pain of damnation, whether through the motive of the virtue of hope, through the motive of the virtue of religion, or through that of some other virtue; but that there is no precept of affective love which obliges us of itself to make interior, formal, and proper acts of the virtue of charity. It is on this that a Writer lashes out in these terms against the Jesuits: *They have gone so far as this impiety, of maintaining that the interior act of the love of God was only counseled, not commanded; and it was proclaimed everywhere that they wished to abolish the first and the principal of God's Commandments.*

To answer this horrible accusation, the Jesuits did not undertake the defense of the doctrine of Father Antoine Sirmond; but they endeavored only to excuse him, saying that if he had failed on this occasion, it was only after great Theologians. In fact, I find in the Book of a Doctor of Louvain named Dubois, Royal Professor of Holy Scripture, who wrote on the propositions of Moral Theology censured by Pope Alexander VII in 1665 and 1666 - I find that this Doctor, who is in no way of this opinion, having caused a search to be made for the Authors who had held it, places among them Bannez, a famous Theologian of the Order of Saint Dominic; Cardinal Cajetan, of the same Order; Marchantius; Jean Sanchez (who must not be confused with the Jesuit of the same surname); Jansenius, Bishop of Ghent; and Molanus, another celebrated Doctor of Louvain. I also find in another Author who gives himself the name Florimond du Plessis, Saint Antonin, Sylvester, Almaïn, an ancient Doctor of Paris, the learned Tostat, Gerson, and several others cited in favor of this doctrine. But this is not what the Jesuits of today principally wish people to consider. They will be content merely to point out that, if this doctrine is not attributed to the Order of Saint Dominic, nor to the University of Louvain, nor to the Faculty of Paris, although it was taught by one or more

Doctors of these celebrated Societies, there is scarcely any justice in wishing it to be regarded as the doctrine of the Body of Jesuits because it is found in the Book of one of their Writers.

Whether, then, this doctrine was taught by others or was not; whether it was suffered with impunity in non-Jesuit Doctors and censured only in the Book of a Jesuit - this is not the matter at issue. What the Jesuits claim here solely is to make known, as they declare aloud, that they reprove this doctrine and that it was never that of their Society.

But in order to show that it is not, so to speak, after the fact that they make this declaration, as though the clamor raised against them on this occasion had caused them to change their sentiment on this subject and to return, despite themselves, to sound doctrine, it will now be shown, by the citation of a great number of their most celebrated Doctors, that the doctrine of their Society has at all times been such as they declare it to be today concerning the indispensable obligation of the precept of the love of God. Here are the extracts from these Theologians.

Cardinal Bellarmine. [Tom. 4, l. 6, *De grat. & lib. arbitr.*, cap. 7.] Holy Scripture does not say only that charity is a gift of God, but in addition it commands us to love God. Now it does not command us merely to preserve the infused habit of charity, but it obliges us to love God with all our heart; for laws have for their object the acts of virtues and not the habits.

Cardinal de Lugo. [Disput. 7, sect. 12, num. 250.] The precept of loving God is absolutely of natural law. Even if there were no positive command of God, this precept would oblige us to it.

Suarez. [Tract. ult. *De Charitat.*, disp. 5, *De praecepto Charitatis.*] First, I say that this precept is for all men. This is evident from the sixth Chapter of Deuteronomy: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*; and from the tenth of Saint Matthew: *This Commandment is the first and the greatest of all*. The reason for my conclusion is that this love is a means necessary for salvation; now such means are always of an obligation of precept.

Suarez, continued. [Sect. 3.] I say, secondly, that this precept sometimes obliges of itself. For the rest, it is difficult positively to determine the time when it obliges. On this one must say what is said of the precept of restitution: that one is obliged not to delay very long.

And elsewhere. [T. 2, *De Relig.*, lib. 1, *De Orat.*, cap. 30.] One may give this general rule for all these affirmative precepts: that the acts they command must not be long delayed, and that these acts must be reiterated from time to time.

Molina. [Tract. 5, *De Justit. & Jure*, disp. 59, p. 3165.] I am persuaded that we are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, by virtue of the precept of the love that we owe to God, to undertake the defense of his interests; to oppose what might wound his honor and his glory; to do what we believe can be useful for this; and that we must do it at the peril of our life. This does not prevent there being (he says again two pages later) a particular precept of the love of God, as of a thing which is owed to him, and this love being commanded to us as a means necessary to obtain the possession of God and eternal life.

Laymann. [Libro 2, tract. 3, cap. 2.] The precept of loving God above all things, insofar as it is affirmative, obliges only at certain times. The first time is when man has attained the use of reason, God, through the lights of Faith, being sufficiently represented to him as his last end. According to

Suarez (he adds), man is obliged often during the course of his life to produce acts of charity toward God.

Becan. [De Sacr., cap. 35, q., num. 4.] There is a double precept of loving God. The first is a general precept, which is comprised in the whole Decalogue and obliges us to keep the Law of God. The second is particular and positive, which obliges us to produce the act of charity, whether that act is a movement of love toward God or of detestation of sin insofar as it offends God.

Thomas Sanchez. [In Decal., l. 2, c. 3.] It is certain that there is a commandment to love God. The reason is that the act of the love of God is necessary for Salvation. *He who does not love, says Saint John, remains in death.* Now everything that is necessary for Salvation is commanded.

Tannerus. [In 2. 2, d. 2, *De Spe & Charit.*, q. 4, d. 4, n. 48.] The precept of the love of God obliges at the point of death, and when, after having attained the age of reason, one is capable of penetrating the truths that engage us to love God above all things and to refer everything to him. This is the common sentiment of the Doctors.... Moreover, the precept of loving God above all things imposes on us the obligation to produce from time to time acts of love toward him, although one cannot precisely determine in particular the times of this obligation.

Arriaga. [Disp. 36, *De charit.*, sect. 3, n. 10.] In view of the motives for this love that I have marked above, when I proved the obligation that this precept imposes on us, it is saying little to maintain that one is obliged at least once a year to renew its act.

Filliucius. [Tr. 2, c. 9, n. 287.] It appears to me that the fulfillment of the obligation which this precept imposes on us cannot be better determined as to time than it is in the third opinion, where there is marked for this the beginning of the use of reason.... the point of death.... and, in the third place, the time of life that passes between these two extremes, during which there is an obligation to make from time to time acts of the love of God.

Hurtado de Mendoza, after marking the beginning of the use of reason for the first fulfillment of this precept, adds: [d. 174, sect. 5.] I say, secondly, that one is obliged to make acts of it in the course of life, and every year; and it is asking scarcely anything to limit this obligation there.

Gregory of Valencia, after proving the possibility and the necessity there is for salvation of fulfilling this precept, and determining with the other Theologians the obligation to make the act of the love of God above all things at the beginning of the use of reason and at the point of death, notes still several other cases in which one is obliged to it, as when one receives some singular benefit from God, etc. [In 2.20, disp. 3, q. 19.]

Finally, I do not believe that, among the very great number of Jesuit Theologians who have printed courses of Theology, a single one can be shown who ever denied the necessity of the act of the love of God for salvation. An infinity of them applied themselves to proving it when they had occasion to do so. The Theologian of Louvain whom I have already cited, Dubois, took the trouble to gather as many as thirty and to transcribe their passages. Only the most famous of the Society have been reported here, in order not to weary the Reader with a multitude of extracts which all say nearly the same thing. After which the Jesuits will find themselves sufficiently exculpated before the public tribunal from the calumny that people do not cease to impose upon them even every day, by publishing everywhere that they exempt the faithful from the obligation of loving God.

It is surprising that their calumniators are so readily listened to on this subject. For, although in order to justify them not everyone can have recourse to the Books of their Theologians, which are not within the reach of an infinity of persons, who is there in the world, provided he has some affection for Books of devotion, who has not read or been able to read the Books of Rodriguez, of Saint-Jure, of Hayneuve, of Suffren, of Dupont, and a quantity of others which are in the hands of all persons of piety? One has only to open the Books of these Jesuits to see on every page that they recommend nothing so much as the exercise of divine love. And whoever wished to take the trouble to consult the Bibliography of their Writers would see, from the titles alone, that no Society has ever labored more to inspire this excellent virtue in Christians.

What is most bizarre here is that, at the same time as people continued in these latter years to decry the Jesuits on this article, they accused them of being too zealous partisans of pure and disinterested love, and it did not depend upon a thousand people that they should not be made to pass for Quietists. And what is still more admirable is that this same Father Sirmond, who was the occasion of so much clamor only by denying the indispensable necessity of affective love, understood nothing else by this affective love than pure and disinterested charity, of which since then not only the necessity but even the possibility has been called into doubt.

The Jesuits, in order perfectly to exculpate themselves on the subject in question, add that they condemn with all their heart certain particular propositions that relate to it and that are among those which Popes Alexander VII, Innocent XI, and Alexander VIII condemned. They are the following five Propositions.

1. There is no obligation, by virtue of the divine precepts which concern Faith, Hope, and Charity, to produce any act of these virtues at any time of life whatsoever.
2. We should not dare to condemn of mortal sin one who in his whole life should make only one act of the love of God.
3. It is probable that the precept of Charity does not of itself oblige, in rigor, to make an act of it every five years.
4. This precept obliges only when we are bound to be reconciled with God and have no other means of returning to his grace.
5. Man is not obliged to love God either at the beginning or in the course of his moral life.

The Jesuits therefore say anathema to these five propositions. They declare that this is not, and that this has never been, the doctrine of their Society; they do not even believe that these propositions can be shown in the books of any of their Theologians such as they are in the censure of the Popes.

The Doctors, in view of the great difficulty, or, to speak more accurately, the impossibility, of determining surely all the times and all the conjunctures in which the precept of charity obliges to the act it commands, have had very different sentiments on this subject. The Jesuits followed the doctrine which they found common in the School in this matter, as in all the others. The Popes did not believe they ought to determine anything concerning it; and they contented themselves with censuring the propositions in question, which departed too visibly from the truth, without touching several others whose truth or falsity was not evident to them.

These are the things of which the Jesuits believed they ought to inform the public, seeing themselves so unjustly accused on a point of this importance. If after this calumny were still to prevail, they would console themselves before God and would regard this oppression as a disposition of Providence which they would adore and to which they would endeavor to submit with an entire resignation. I pass to the second point, which concerns the doctrine of philosophical sin.

Sentiments of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus on the Doctrine of Philosophical Sin

Many people speak of the error of philosophical sin without knowing very distinctly in what it consists. The distinction between philosophical sin and theological sin is neither new nor chimerical, as some imagine. It is from Saint Thomas, who says that sin is considered in one way by the Theologian and in another by the Philosopher. [Ia. 2, q. 71, a. 6, ad 5.] The former, he says, examines the nature of sin insofar as it is an offense against God, and the latter insofar only as it is contrary to reason. It is the same sin viewed under different aspects. According to the one it is called theological, and according to the other it is called philosophical. According to the one it offends God; according to the other it offends reason.

Since Theology is ordinarily taught in Latin, the terms employed in it must be understood according to the force they have in that language. The word *offendere*, which in French signifies *to offend*, has various significations in Latin according as it is taken in the proper or in the figurative sense. In the proper sense it signifies what happens to a body which is in motion and which strikes another upon encountering it. In the figurative sense it is said of a rational being who acts against the will, against the inclinations of another, against the respect and against the obedience which he owes him. This signification is the one most used in our language.

The Theologians, following this usage of the Latin Language, say that sin, taking the force of the terms, is an offense against God, *offensa Dei*, only insofar as it strikes against the obedience which is owed to him; that when neither God nor his commands are known by the one who commits the sin, this sin, speaking rigorously, ought not to be called an offense against God, because then it does not directly strike against this obedience nor against his commands, which the sinner does not know. But this sin always offends reason, because it is against the lights of conscience and against that law written in our hearts, which are not things different from reason. This is what must first be well conceived in order to understand the question of philosophical sin. This perhaps appears a vain subtlety when speaking Theology in our language; but it is not so in the customary language of Theologians, that is to say, in the Latin language. After all, in matters of this kind one must always agree upon the signification which usage attaches to words.

It is then necessary to make a very important observation. It is that the Theologians who have made all these precise distinctions, and principally the Jesuits, when saying that the sin of a man who does not know God is not properly called an offense against God, do not thereby deny that it is a sin, and a sin punishable by damnation. On the contrary, most of the Theologians say that, even in this supposition, the sinner is justly punished with Hell, because although he does not act against the commands of a known God, he nevertheless acts against the law which that God has placed in his heart; that this law marks out his duty for him and makes him understand that he violates it by not following it; which, according to them, suffices to render him guilty of the penalties with which this God, altogether unknown though he is to him, punishes him in this life and in the other. Thus almost all the Theologians agree that the sins of the Barbarians which gave rise to this question, as soon as they are against the natural law, are punished by God in hell; but they do not all reason from

the same principles, and they posit different ones from which they equally conclude the just punishment of these sorts of sinners.

Some lay down as a principle that an invincible ignorance of God is never found, at least for a long time, among the Barbarians who have the use of reason, whether their natural light, stirred by the sight of creatures, suffices to give them this knowledge, or whether God acts interiorly in them by ways which are unknown to us and of which they alone could give an account. What Saint Paul says of the Pagans in the Epistle to the Romans gives great authority to this System. However that may be, this principle being laid down, it follows that the sins of these Pagans offend not only reason but also the obedience which they owe to God, and that they are offenses against God in the most exact signification that this term can have in scholastic language.

The other Theologians have reasoned from an altogether opposite principle, which they believed to be more conformable to experience. They have said that there could be among some Barbarians an invincible ignorance of God; but to this principle they add that other one of which I have already spoken: that in order for the sin of a Barbarian to merit damnation, it is not necessary that it be directly against the obedience owed to God, nor that the sinner know distinctly that the law which he violates comes from that God; but that it suffices that he commit this sin against the lights of his conscience, which marks out his duty for him and makes him understand at the same time the obligation he has to conform himself to this law, which is written in his heart. That, by not doing so, he justly incurs the disfavor of God and the punishment attached thereto for all eternity. In this manner, neither in the one opinion nor in the other is there among the Barbarians any purely philosophical sin, that is to say, one which purely offends reason without offending God, either directly or indirectly, and which does not merit Hell, when it has the other conditions required for the essence of mortal sin.

All this having been set forth, it will be easy to understand in what the error of philosophical sin consists. It consists first in saying that certain Barbarians perform actions against the natural law, such as homicides, adulteries, etc., which are not mortal sins worthy of damnation, because in all those who are ignorant of God sins are purely Philosophical, that is to say, only against reason, and in no way Theological, that is to say, they are not against God, whom the sinner does not know and by them, consequently, God himself does not hold himself offended. [*In Decreto Alexandri VIII, 24 Aug. 1690.*]

A second Proposition may be made which will contain the same error, or an altogether similar error founded upon the same principle. It is this: that not only those who are ignorant of God and who have never known him, but also those who are not ignorant of him, if, when acting against the Law, they do not actually think that they offend God, do not in fact offend him; that their sins are purely philosophical, because they see clearly that they are against reason, but that they are not Theological, because they do not think that they are against God, and thus they are not worthy of being eternally punished. This concerns the sins of an infinity of libertines who, they say, commit the most horrible actions and abandon themselves to the most extreme debaucheries without ever thinking that God forbids them. It is precisely in these two Propositions that the error of Philosophical sin consists, and it seems in fact expressed in the famous Theology Thesis of Dijon about which so much clamor was made some years ago.

It was denounced to the Bishops and to the Pope as a new heresy of the Jesuits. It was condemned by Alexander VIII on the twenty-fourth of August in the year 1690. The Jesuits, who were as much scandalized by it as the others, anticipated the condemnation of the Pope by being the first to condemn it in public writings. They subsequently produced, among others, one entitled *The Error of Philosophical Sin Combated by the Jesuits*, in which they demonstrated that this had never been the doctrine of their Society. They showed, moreover, that this very Thesis was in no way conformable to the writings of the Professor of Dijon, which they caused to be authenticated and brought to Paris. They printed extracts from them which contained only the common doctrine in Theology on this subject. And in fact, in reading the writings of the Professor, one does not comprehend how he could have made a Thesis of this nature.

This is not the place to enter into the detail of the defense of the Jesuits, nor of the calumnies which were published against them on this subject. Nothing was omitted in order to tear them apart and to render them odious everywhere. For this purpose people dared to falsify the writings of the Professor; to cite the objections which he made to himself as though they had been his assertions; and to make him advance not only the most detestable but also the most extravagant maxims, so that, in order to say what people made him say, not only would he have had to be a libertine by profession, but also mad in the sovereign degree. And what is surprising, and what will never be believed unless one is willing to take the trouble to compare the writing of the Jesuits with those of their Adversary, is that after these Fathers had published the true extracts from the writings of the Professor in order to show the falsification that had been made in them, no other answer was given than that it was by a figure of Rhetoric that he had been made to speak in that manner. [The true extracts are in the *Second Letter to a Man of the Court*. The false extracts are in the *Denunciation of the New Heresy*, art. 3, third denunciation, pp. 81-82.]

However that may be, in order to execute the design proposed here, the Jesuits declare, first, that they condemn this doctrine as scandalous, as rash, as offensive to pious ears, and as erroneous, which are the qualifications with which the Holy See censured it.

Second, they declare, and they have always declared with truth, that this was never the doctrine of their Society, and that none of their Authors ever taught it.

Third, not only is this doctrine not that of their Society, but none of the principles of their Theology leads to it. Some of their Theologians have held, after several others, that invincible ignorance of God can exist for some time among some Barbarians; but they have added at the same time that these Barbarians, acting against the lights of their conscience, committed not only philosophical sins but mortal sins worthy of hell, as I explained previously. Others have held that, in order to offend God in this manner, it is necessary to know him; but they have at the same time laid down as a principle that invincible ignorance of God was impossible, as several other Theologians think. In a word, in reasoning in this manner they have reasoned as people reason in all the Catholic Schools. From neither the one nor the other of these two principles taken separately does the error of philosophical sin with respect to the Barbarians follow. And there has never been, so far as is known, any other Jesuit who joined them both together, except a Spaniard, namely Arriaga, who did so after the example of some other non-Jesuit Theologians, but who was neither followed nor preceded in such a doctrine by the Theologians of his Society, not even by the Professor of Dijon, who in fact admits neither ignorance nor forgetfulness of God that renders sin purely philosophical, and who expressed

himself as he did only in a purely metaphysical and morally impossible hypothesis, as he expressly says himself.

In the fourth place, the Jesuits declare that the constant and universal doctrine of their Society is that the sins of libertines, of habitual sinners, and of the hardened are imputed to them in themselves or in their cause; that their Theologians follow in this only the common doctrine in the Catholic Schools; that every ignorance or inadvertence which has its source in the free will of the sinner cannot excuse his sin. And, on the occasion of the Thesis of philosophical sin, they did not fear to challenge their Adversaries to show anyone among the great number of Jesuit authors of every kind - Interpreters of Scripture, Scholastic Theologians, Controversialists, Casuists or Canonists, Preachers or those who composed Treatises of devotion, and even Philosophers themselves - they challenge their Adversaries, I say, to produce any one of them who, when treating of ignorance or inadvertence with respect to our duties, did not distinguish that which is culpable from that which is not; or who did not always suppose this distinction; and who did not say, when treating the matter, that voluntary ignorance or inadvertence never excuses the evil which one has thus ignored through a criminal negligence. So constantly has this doctrine, which is directly opposed to the error of philosophical sin, always been that of their Society.

After this, what is the charity, what is the equity, what is the sincerity of those who wish to persuade the world that the error of philosophical sin is the doctrine of the Jesuits? Where is the good faith of those who every day, in Books and in Theses, affect maliciously to inveigh against the error of Philosophical sin more vehemently than against those of Nestorius and Arius, in order to cause its infamy to fall back upon the Jesuits, who detest it more than they do, and whose Society, of all the Societies that are in the Church of God, has always openly professed to be the most submissive and the most universally submissive to the decisions of the Holy See which concern faith and morals? I pass to the article of probable opinions.

Sentiments of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus on the Doctrine of Probability

There is scarcely any subject of which so much has been spoken in the Church as has been spoken, for forty or fifty years, of that of probability. But it has been spoken of so variously, and so many people, either through malice or for want of understanding the matter sufficiently well, have cast so much confusion into it, that most of the world does not have a sufficiently distinct idea of it. This is why, it being fitting to make oneself well understood here and to explain oneself on this article without evasion, it was believed that a clear notion ought to be given of the terms employed in this matter, as well as of the true and principal state of the question. Not only the Jesuit Theologians, but also all the others who have treated this subject with the design of clarifying it, require first that an opinion, in order to be truly probable, have two general conditions. The first, that it have nothing contrary to the dogmas of the faith, nothing opposed to the truths received by the Church, nor to any evident reason. In the second place, it must be supported by good reasons, and one must not rashly undertake to maintain it against the common sentiment of the Doctors. If one of these conditions is lacking in an opinion, it is no longer probable and is not among those of which there is dispute here.

Among probable opinions there are, as it were, two kinds, according to the degree of probability which they have. There are some which are called less probable, and others which are called more probable. The principal question in this matter turns upon the comparison made, touching some point of practice, between two opinions which are both probable, but of which one is less probable and the other more probable; that is to say, of which one is supported by stronger reasons, and the other by reasons less strong, though good. It is asked whether it is permitted, on this point of morals or practice, to follow the opinion which is less probable, abandoning the more probable.

This question has no place when the less probable is the safer. Here that one of the two opinions which, by everyone's admission, may be followed without sin is called the safer opinion. That one which some reasons prove would involve sin if it were followed is called the less safe. For example, upon this question: Whether a man who has committed a mortal sin is obliged to confess it at the first opportunity, and, supposing that he does not do so, whether he commits a new sin; there are two opinions: that of Saint Bonaventure, who says that in this case one is obliged to confess it as soon as possible; and that of Saint Thomas, who says that there is no obligation, under pain of sin, to do so. The first is the safer, because it is certain that in practicing it one does not sin. The second is the less safe, because there are reasons which prove that one sins in following it, although there are also other reasons which prove that one does not sin.

It can therefore happen, and it often happens, that the less probable is the safer; and in this case it is clear that one may follow the less probable. But the question is to know whether, when the less probable is at the same time the less safe, one may follow it. This is properly the capital question on this subject. From it have arisen an infinity of other difficulties in this matter, of which it would be too long to make an enumeration. It is therefore upon this capital question that the Jesuits must explain themselves here, and say what they think of this proposition: *In the concurrence of two opposed probable opinions, one may follow that which is the less probable and the less safe.* Here is what they have to say upon it.

First, this proposition, taken according to the odious ideas and explanations which the adversaries of the Jesuits are accustomed to give of it in their books and in their discourses, was never the opinion of their Society nor of their Theologians. They condemn it, and have always condemned it, such as it is represented in those false portraits which are made of it. In a word, it was never the sentiment of their Society that one may follow the less probable opinion when it is not truly probable and when it does not have the two conditions marked above, one of which is negative, namely, that it must not be contrary to Scripture, nor to Tradition, nor to the Decisions of the Holy See, nor to an evident reason. The other condition is positive, namely, that it must be supported by good reasons which are even recognized as such by all those, or by most of those themselves, who combat it.

Second, this doctrine, even taken with the two conditions which I have just stated, is not the opinion of their Society in the sense that one is obliged to follow it. In fact, several of their Theologians have combated it and combat it still every day. And it was thus that their thirteenth General Congregation replied when this question was put to it on behalf of the Pope: namely, whether the Society adopted this doctrine as a sentiment to which it attached itself to the exclusion of the opposed doctrine.

Third, the Jesuits will not say absolutely of this doctrine, as they have said of the error of philosophical sin and of what is imputed to them on the article of the love of God, that it has not been the doctrine of the Society. They acknowledge that it has been so in this sense, that a great part of their Theologians have maintained it; and it is of this that they must render a particular account to the public.

This reason is taken from the rule which the Jesuits imposed upon themselves from the birth of their Society, and of which I spoke at the beginning of this writing, which was to teach in Theology the opinions commonly received in the Catholic Schools. Now, that one may follow the less safe opinion, provided that it is truly probable, was not only the doctrine commonly received when the Jesuits began to write on Theology, but it was also almost generally maintained in all the Catholic Schools, so that the contrary had incomparably fewer followers there; and this is what caused the Jesuits to incline to this side much more than to the other. This fact is so important and so essential to their justification that, although it has been demonstrated a thousand times, it is well to report here a part of the proofs.

Pierre Navarre, whose book was printed as early as the year 1597, says that this was in his time the more common doctrine, *communioem Theologorum sententiam*. [Lib. 3 de restitut., c. 1, n. 237. Edit. Tolet. 1597.]

As early as the year 1592, Salonus of the Order of Saint Augustine wrote that this doctrine had a greater number of defenders, and defenders of greater authority, and stronger reasons than the opposed doctrine: *Cum habeat plures ac graviores authores & firmiora fundamenta quam opposita*; and above all from the School of Saint Thomas, *ac maxime ex discipulis Sancti Thomae*. [De justit. & jure, contr. 2, concl. 4, ad art. 4, quaest. 63.]

This doctrine was therefore upon this footing before any Jesuit had yet written on Moral Theology. The greater number of the Jesuit Doctors followed it, as the greater number of the Doctors of the other Catholic Schools, and above all the School of Saint Thomas, followed it; what can their crime have been in this?

It was so generally followed in the School of Saint Thomas that, from 1570 until 1659, in the space of nearly a hundred years, during which a great number of Thomists wrote on Theology, perhaps not a single one will be found who was not of this sentiment.

In this space of time several Bishops wrote on these matters, and almost all embraced the same sentiment. One may see upon this a little Latin book printed at Paris in 1659 and entitled *Quaestio facti*, which gives the proof of it in detail. An infinity of Doctors of Louvain, Salamanca, Douai, and all the most celebrated Universities did not hesitate upon it. The only three Doctors of the Sorbonne who printed Courses of Theology were of the same opinion, as was M. Bail, Sub- Penitentiary of Paris. M. Hambert in France says that it was the ordinary doctrine of Theology: *Ita communiter Doctores*. [a. In 1. 2ae de opinione probabili, art. 4.] Bonacina, who was a Bishop in Italy, wrote the same thing there: *Ita communiter Theologi*. [b. T. 2, disput. 2, q. 4, l. 3, de restitutione.] Others in Germany and in Spain say the same.

This being so, what could the Jesuits have done more prudently than to conform themselves in their doctrine to the multitude of all the Theologians of whom I have just spoken, among whom are counted several Bishops, a great number of Religious of all the Orders, and above all of that of Saint Dominic, and the most distinguished Doctors of the most famous Universities of Europe?

But that upon which the Jesuits doubtless have a right to ask justice from the public is that, despite facts so evident and so incontestable, despite what is attested by several Doctors who printed before the Jesuits had written on matters of Moral Theology - that from that time the doctrine of probability was the most common among the Theologians - despite all this, it has been undertaken to persuade the whole earth that this doctrine was born in the School of the Jesuits; that it is an invention of their policy, a secret which they found to accommodate the Gospel to the corruption of the heart of man; that it is desired to render them alone responsible for the bad effects which it is claimed to produce; finally, that after this doctrine has been disfigured and rendered infinitely odious, it is spoken of as the doctrine proper and specific, so to speak, of the Jesuits, who nevertheless received it only from others and taught it only with all the others.

It is upon this, I say, that the Jesuits hope that the public will render them justice; but they must still enlighten it upon an important point in this matter. Why is it, it is said, that the Dominican Fathers, for example, having proscribed this doctrine in their Schools, although it had taken birth there and had been universally followed there for nearly a hundred years, why do the Jesuits, who received it from them, not do as much? Here is what they have to answer upon this.

1. Among the Jesuits full liberty is left to combat the doctrine of probability, and there is no obligation to maintain it.
2. Several make use of this liberty every day; and for many years there have been seen in their principal Colleges of France, as at Paris, La Fleche, Lyon, and Toulouse, various Theses maintained against this doctrine; the same thing has been seen at Rome and elsewhere.
3. If one counts the printed Books which have appeared for fifteen or twenty years upon this matter in order to treat it theologically (for I do not speak of satires against the Jesuits), one will find more Books come forth from the Society than from any other Religious Order or any other School which were made to maintain the doctrine opposed to that of probability.

Let us now say why their Society has not until the present judged it fitting authentically to forbid all Professors to teach this doctrine. These reasons are such that there is much likelihood they will be approved.

The first and principal is that the Jesuits do not believe that they can attribute to themselves the authority to condemn a doctrine which has been that of all the Catholic Schools and Universities; which has been maintained in Books by several learned and holy Prelates, and by almost all those of this rank who have treated the matter since it has been disputed in the School.

Second, it in no way befits the Jesuits to proscribe a doctrine which the Holy See has always refused to censure. For it is known that its condemnation was pursued at Rome with all possible vigor, above all during the Pontificate of Innocent XI, and that the Holy See never wished to do so; and this was apparently one of the reasons which prevented the last Assembly of the Clergy of France from placing the proposition which contains this doctrine among the propositions which the Prelates censured, contenting themselves with making at the end a declaration of the sentiment which had prevailed upon this matter in the Assembly. Even if the Jesuits had only this reason, which includes several, there is no person who, weighing it maturely, would not acknowledge that their conduct in this is very prudent; but they have still others.

The second reason for the conduct of the Jesuits in this regard is the manner in which the decline of this doctrine in the School in France came about, for elsewhere it is not upon the same footing. First, those who initially attacked it did so in order by this means to render the Jesuits odious, not knowing, through the little familiarity they had with Scholasticism, that in attacking them on this point they were taking to task all the most celebrated Schools and almost all the Theologians. Second, they began by disfiguring this doctrine and by proposing it in an odious and captious manner, concealing the reasons upon which it is founded, drawing conclusions which are in no way attached to it, and confounding a thousand things in a subject which demands, in order to be well treated, a very exact analysis, because of an infinity of circumstances of which a single one altogether changes the case; attributing to the doctrine itself the abuses which could be made of it, an inconvenience common to almost all questions of Morals. After having thus decried it by the expositions which they made of it according to their fancy, they combated it represented under those ideas under which it was easy to make it appear bizarre, ridiculous, and untenable. This soon produced the universal unleashing of all those who do not take the trouble to examine things thoroughly.

Nothing more was needed to shake many Theologians and entire Schools, who for various reasons made it an honor and a merit to abandon this doctrine. For, moreover, the question having always been problematic, there was nothing which could constrain a Theologian to defend this opinion rather than that which is opposed to it. But after all, this reflection upon the manner in which the face of Theology has changed so greatly in this regard in France is a very strong motive for suspending one's judgment upon the quality of the doctrine itself until the Church or the Holy See have declared themselves. For, finally, without doing wrong to the Doctors who combat it today, one may bring into comparison with them those who formerly defended it so unanimously and those who still defend it in several places of Europe.

The third reason of the Jesuits, which in my opinion ought to appear very strong, is that there are certain very important matters in which ordinary practice, even among the most upright people,

seems scarcely capable of being justified except by the doctrine in question. These consequences, which the Jesuits envisage, cause them to go with bridle in hand and prevent them from advancing too far before the Church has spoken.

The plurality of Benefices, even supposing that the Beneficiaries make a good use of them; the determination of what is called in this matter decent maintenance in relation to their estate and quality, furnish great difficulties; and it would not be easy to show that the most regular persons commonly follow in practice, upon all this, the more probable opinion. But whatever may be the case upon this point, here are still some other examples.

Is there an unanswerable demonstration that the common practice in France touching contracts for the constitution of annuities is supported by the more probable opinion? It is not more than three centuries since there was much dispute about the nature of this Contract, and as strongly as there is dispute today upon the question of the Three Contracts. Several learned Doctors maintained that it was usurious, because the sum, having been found to be reimbursed at the end of twenty years by the interest which equals the principal, the same interest continues to be received; and when redemption takes place, the principal is paid anew; so that for twenty thousand francs given, one finds oneself to have received forty thousand francs, and very often much more.

It is also certain that, to justify this Contract, a good direction of intention is necessary, according to which one intends to purchase, by the alienation of the principal, not a certain sum of money payable every year (for one does not purchase money with money), but the right to exact every year a certain sum from the one to whom the principal has been paid. All this, not without reason, appeared delicate to those ancient Doctors, and appeared so much so to the Popes who were consulted upon it that Martin V and Callixtus III consented to permit this Contract only upon several conditions, of which there were two principal ones. The first was that the annuity should be secured by mortgage, and that the right of the one who constitutes it should be established upon a determinate property which was of a nature to produce revenue, for example upon a piece of land or upon a house. The second, that if this property should perish, the annuity should no longer be paid. Pope Pius V, after these two other Popes, and the Council of Bordeaux held in the last century, declared that these two conditions were necessary.

Nevertheless, in France these two conditions are not observed: annuities are often constituted upon all the goods and upon the person of the one who receives the principal. If the goods are lost, the annuity always continues and the person remains obligated. Is it therefore quite certain that the practice of France in this kind of contract is founded upon the more probable opinion, being contrary to the Bulls of three Popes and to the decision of a Council of France; this contract, destitute of the conditions which I have just stated, having appeared usurious to these Popes and to a Council, and having even appeared such by its nature to so many able ancient Theologians, without stronger reasons having since that time been brought forward than those which were produced then? And it is to be observed

that this opinion, upon which there is no hesitation, would scarcely be probable if one held to the definition which the common run of Casuists give of a probable opinion, in which they place a condition that it not be contrary to the decisions of the Holy See and of Councils; for here it is a question of a pure dogma of Morals, and not of those questions in which there is conflict over the

bounds of spiritual authority and temporal authority. It is solely a question of knowing whether it is a contract permitted in conscience or not.

What shall I say of the contracts made by Guardians on the occasion of wards' monies, above all in Brittany, and of many others used in commerce among Merchants or among men of business? Some of them were proposed to the last Assembly of the Clergy, upon which it dared decide nothing.

Many other examples could be furnished in various matters in which it would be difficult to show that the rule of practice was the more probable opinion. And if this is not demonstrated, there is no longer any rule of conscience for acting without danger of sinning except the doctrine of the less probable opinion. It even seems that these particular cases ought to be solidly decided before the general principle were touched, for fear of falling into contradiction. All this shows that the Jesuits have reason not to go so quickly, and that they are in no way blameworthy for not yet having made a decree against the doctrine in question, and for having in this imitated the Holy See, which, despite the solicitations made at Rome, has not yet judged it fitting to declare itself. Is it laxity in Moral Theology to await the decision of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, when one is in the disposition in which the Jesuits are to follow it in everything, and when one is, like them, without obstinacy and without interest upon it?

Here, then, in a few words, is the conduct of the Jesuits upon all this. 1. Their Doctors for the most part taught this doctrine because they saw it almost generally followed in all the Catholic Schools. 2. They did not for that reason make it a sentiment of their Society to the exclusion of the other, which several among them have followed and still follow every day. 3. They were neither its authors nor its only defenders, but they maintained it with the multitude of the Theologians and with a great number of Bishops. 4. They await the authority of the Holy See in order to condemn it, because they do not believe they can do so by their own authority and without this perhaps drawing consequences for usages upon which it does not belong to them to decide. It appears that one would have to be very hard to please not to approve this conduct, and very inequitable to render the Jesuits responsible for the doctrine of probability, supposing that it were such as so many people claim.

Although the Popes did not wish to condemn the doctrine of probability, they nevertheless censured some particular propositions which have relation to this matter, and upon which the Jesuits also wish to declare their sentiment to the public. Here are these propositions.

If a Book by a modern Author appears, his opinion must be judged probable, provided that it is not established that it has been rejected as improbable by the Holy See. [Alexander VII, Proposition 28, 1665.]

It is not illicit, in the administration of the Sacraments, to follow a probable opinion touching the validity of the Sacrament, abandoning the safer, unless some law, some pact, or some danger of great harm forbids it. [Innocent XI, 1679.]

I deem it probable that a Judge may judge according to the less probable opinion.

Generally speaking, one acts prudently in following a probable opinion, however slight the probability may be, whether it is extrinsic or intrinsic, and provided that the opinion does not go outside the bounds of probability.

An infidel, relying upon a probable opinion, will be excused from his infidelity in not believing our Mysteries.

It is not permitted to follow a probable opinion, even the most probable among those which are probable. [Alexander VIII, Proposition 3, 1690.]

These are the things which the Popes condemned upon the article of probability; these are what the Jesuits also condemn, and what most of their Theologians had combated before the condemnation itself.

The Jesuits therefore declare: 1. that they condemn all these propositions; 2. that a great number of their Theologians combated them, either expressly, when they had occasion to do so in their books, or in the principles which they establish upon other occasions; 3. that after a fairly exact search, scarcely any of their Theologians have been found who taught upon any one of these points anything similar; 4. that in case anyone had done so, they condemn them in his book as in all the others in which they might be found.

There are several other propositions which the three Popes whom I have named condemned at various times, among which are the preceding ones as well as some others which I reported above. There are one hundred and forty-three in all upon various matters, partly of Morals, partly of Theology. Most, assuredly, are by no Jesuit. Books have been made in the Low Countries, even by others than Jesuits, to show the truth of this fact. Those which are by some Jesuits were taught by many other Theologians of various countries and of various Schools, Orders, and Universities; none was ever the doctrine of their Society; very few have had many defenders among the Jesuits; and if there is any one of this sort, they have had at least as many in the other Orders and in the other Schools.

But of whatever nature they may be, the Jesuits condemn them all, and bind themselves to do, as they have done, above all since the condemnation; that is to say, to take care that they are never taught with impunity in their Schools.

I do not believe that reasonable and disinterested persons, for whom alone this declaration is made, can require from the Jesuits a declaration clearer, more precise, and more universal concerning their doctrine. For we always suppose that we shall gain nothing over many others whom obstinacy, envy, jealousy, and the spirit of cabal render incapable of entering into our just defenses. Nor do I believe that they can better justify themselves than by the three propositions which were first made and proved in this writing.

The first, that the doctrine of their Society has always been that which was commonly received in the Catholic Schools and Universities. The second, that when any one of their Theologians departed from this rule which they themselves imposed, the multitude of their other Doctors was of the contrary sentiment, and that, commonly speaking, this Theologian always found in the other Schools some guide or some companion in his wandering. The third, that when any opinion was condemned by the Church or by the Holy See, no Society was more exact than that of the Jesuits in preventing it from being maintained in its Schools, and that it has rarely happened that it was done, both upon the matters which have just been set forth here and upon all the others.

So long as these three truths subsist, and the adversaries of the Jesuits do not destroy them, the reputation of their Society is sheltered against calumnies both for the past and for the present. It is by these rules that everything must be decided in this matter. The mistake or obstinacy of some individual which might be reproached to them is only a defect inevitable in all Societies in which a profession of doctrine is made, and more pardonable in that of the Jesuits than in any other, by reason of its extent and of the great number of Professors which it furnishes in all parts of Europe, and even in America and Asia.

But after this Society has so solidly justified itself before the public, it doubtless has a right to expect justice from it, and there is reason to hope that it will henceforth render it. That justice consists in not allowing oneself to be taken in by certain clamors that people deliberately raise from time to time, and in regarding them with a little more coolness. Sometimes it is a Thesis taken up without cause and without any foundation. Sometimes it is an ambiguous proposition susceptible of a very good sense, but to which pains are taken to give a bad one. It is often even a common expression in the School, the language of which it seems people would sometimes wish to forbid to the Jesuits, for whom it is no justification to speak as the others.

Sometimes it is a real fault, but one which is exaggerated, published, and caused to fall upon the whole Body, which is altogether innocent of it. But let people have at least the goodness and equity to reflect upon the conduct which the adversaries of the Jesuits have followed in their regard since the Innovators attempted to make a diversion against them by the accusation of relaxed Morals. Since that time the Books of the Jesuits, their Sermons, their Theses, their Writings, have been examined with the utmost rigor. Nothing is passed over in them; fault is found with them over everything; they are pursued as far as the Indies and as far as China. All sorts of witnesses are heard against them; suspicion alone blackens them; and to clear them, proofs as incontestable as demonstrations of Geometry are required.

A party of people disobedient to the Pope and to the King spreads all these calumnies everywhere, sometimes publicly, sometimes underhand. They have set themselves to leafing through everything that Escobar wrote in Spain, Bauny in France, Laymann in Germany, Filliucius in Italy; and from an entire Library of Spaniards, Italians, Frenchmen, Germans, and Portuguese, a proposition is drawn upon fasting, another upon the duel, another upon the proximate occasion, another upon the love of God. Collections are made of all this; they are enlarged with reflections and invectives; they are distributed everywhere. They are made to be read by young Ecclesiastics, and above all by those whom their birth destines for the Prelacy; they are caused to circulate in the Seminaries; they are spread in the Monasteries; they are placed in the hands of Ladies; the Court is filled with them. There are even the Scholars of the Jesuits to whom they are given to read; the zeal of certain Religious and certain Ecclesiastics goes so far.

After this, must one be astonished if in all places one hears speak only of the relaxed Morals of the Jesuits? Is there any Body in the Church which, being put to this trial, would not receive some injury to its reputation? If it were desired, for example, to render the Order of Saint Dominic responsible for all the propositions advanced by Cajetan, by Bannes, by Vitoria, by Soto, and by several other Doctors of this School, and if the particular sentiments of these Doctors were made to pass for the doctrine of the Order, where would the Dominicans be?

If a Bishop should take it into his head to review all these authors one after another, to make extracts of some bad propositions of Morals which escaped them, and then to make of them a censure filled with the bitterest invectives against the Order of the Dominicans, under the pretext that these Books are found in the Libraries of the Diocese and in the hands of several persons, would these Fathers not have cause to complain?

What I say of the Dominicans, I say of the Theologians of the other Congregations, of the most famous Universities; and it could be said of the Holy Fathers themselves, as I have already observed.

But what in particular would the Sorbonne say if, expressly to discredit it, it were desired to gather up all the Theses which have been maintained there, above all for some years and under certain syndicships; if the extracts from the writings of certain Professors were produced; if the approvals given by the Doctors of the Faculty to a great number of books either suspect or visibly bad were assembled; if consequences were drawn from the condemnation of some of its members by the Ecclesiastical Powers? But if forty Jesuits had signed a case of conscience as pernicious as the one which forty Doctors had signed recently, what an outcry would there not have been against the Society?

I do not say this to offend anyone; but these are examples which I bring solely to show that there is no Society in which faults, and the grossest faults, may not sometimes escape individuals in matters of doctrine, without the Body itself having to be responsible for them. I make these reflections in order to make apparent the difference which there is today in this regard between the Jesuits and the other Societies. Everything is forgotten or excused for some; everything is published, denounced, and condemned when it concerns the others. Here, it is said, it is an individual who fails without consequence; and there the whole Body is decried because of the individual.

The Prelates are wearied with Denunciations against the Jesuits, and they are never spoken to of an infinity of pernicious books and writings which are capable of corrupting everything both in faith and in morals. People go to seek a Thesis even outside the Kingdom in order to have it censured, while a great number of other bad ones are maintained before the eyes of all France, without the Pastors being warned of them. I say all this, finally, to make the public comprehend once for all the injustice which is done to a Society which, after all, edifies it and is not useless to it.

But whatever may happen, aided by the grace of God and sustained by its innocence, it will relax nothing of its zeal against novelties: too happy to suffer persecution for the interests of the Church, and to sacrifice even its honor for His, whose greater glory it has as its end to procure everywhere, even at the expense of its own.