PASTORAL QUESTIONS

III

Questions Concerning Various Categories of Penitents

Proposed for the benefit of the clergy

by Fr. Benedict H. Merkelbach, O.P.

Second edition, corrected

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which he collected for the utility of the clergy

by

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To the Benevolent Reader

That pastoral discipline is by no means to be neglected in seminaries, His Holiness Pope Pius XI commended in his letter concerning seminaries and the studies of clerics, 1 Aug. 1922. For since, by the prescription of law, it is necessary that "there also be lectures concerning pastoral theology, with practical exercises added, especially concerning the method of handing on the Catechism to children and others, of hearing confessions, of visiting the sick, of assisting the dying" (Can. 1365, § 3), the Supreme Pontiff wills that the moderator of studies "indeed assign very much to this discipline, whereby, to be sure, the salvation of souls is most directly sought. Nor indeed shall he teach only how holy divine things must be handled; but besides, how they must be applied to men with ever greater fruit. In this he will have a most diligent regard for the times. For the course of events has brought many things into the morals of the Christian people, unheard of in the times of our fathers: things which today the priest must know thoroughly, that he may find new remedies for new evils in the power of Jesus Christ, and may bring the salutary force of Religion into all the veins of human society."

Complying with this desire, we have already published two practical little works intended for pastors of souls and confessors, concerning all questions of Chastity and Lust, and of Embryology; but now we select matter most properly pastoral, as looking immediately to the internal government of consciences: concerning penitents of diverse conditions to be directed in various ways.

Concerning these matters, if you seek something new, friendly reader, perhaps you will go away empty. But the things which you will be able to find scattered among authors of better note, we have diligently collected for the use of confessors. Yet we have always endeavored to submit all things to our own judgment, to reduce them, as much as we can, to principles, to propose them methodically, and to bring them into a better order. This, in a matter eminently practical, we think has been done not without usefulness: all the more because professors of seminaries, for lack of opportunity of time, are sometimes compelled to run through these things more briefly, or even to omit them entirely. But have we completed the matter with a happy outcome? May God grant it! Yet, because of our insufficiency, we scarcely dare to trust.

This attempt of ours we benignly entrust to the Blessed Virgin, mediatrix of all graces, and to St. Raymond of Pennafort, of the Order of Preachers, distinguished minister of the sacrament of Penance.

The Author

Introduction — Concerning Pastoral Theology

Pastoral theology is the practical instruction of the pastor of souls for the right and fruitful management of his office. Wherefore it is rather an art than a science; but an art which applies the principles of theological science, namely dogmatic and moral theology.

Its end is to feed the sheep; therefore it regards all the means of salvation by which the pastor, in the internal and external forum, may feed his sheep and lead them to the ultimate end. It is the art of ruling souls; the practical method by which the pastor, according to the rules of theology, may be able to direct the souls entrusted to him.

The office of the pastor is threefold: to preach dogmatic and moral doctrine; to direct and edify by example and counsel, where ascetical theology comes into use; to minister the sacraments. Pastoral theology proposes an apt method by which the pastor, in those various offices, may be able to direct souls according to the rules of religious truth, morality, and perfection; whence it also includes the rules and method of preaching and catechizing.

For the present, however, we consider only the method in the administration of the sacraments, chiefly in the internal forum of the sacrament of Penance, where the priest concurs more closely and principally in procuring the salvation of souls by doctrine, correction, and counsel, as also by his own holiness and zeal.

The end of our treatment is the begun instruction of the younger priest for the ministry of souls; in French they would say: "to initiate the young priest into the exercise of the ministry of souls." This we shall furnish by an exposition of the rules which he must follow and of the means which he must use, in order more surely to convert sinners turned away from God, and more greatly to sanctify the just united to God. By these rules, it is by no means our mind to supply for experience, which, under the light of the principles of moral theology, will always remain the mistress of the government of souls; but we intend to use the experience of others, that we may avoid errors and even involuntary defects.

"The government of souls is the art of arts," says St. Gregory. For it is a work most sublime, because a divine work: to exercise the judgment and mercy of God; most difficult, since it is more difficult to know the diseases of the soul than those of the body; most salutary: from the good or bad government of confessors, says St. Alphonsus (Praxis Conf., n. 1), the salvation or ruin of the people depends. For this there are required in the confessor: 1) science possessed not only speculatively but prepared for practice: namely, method, exercise, and practice by which he may be able to apply principles; 2) great prudence; 3) goodness of life and zeal. Hence the things which are set forth in moral theology concerning the qualities and duties of the confessor are here to be applied.

Pastoral discipline is certainly not new, although now it is commonly treated more orderly and more completely. Peter of Poitiers, in the twelfth century, is said to have been the first to cultivate casuistic theology, and to have had several imitators. From the thirteenth century, throughout the whole Middle Age, the penitential Summas were very well known, such as those which Peraldus, O.P. (d.

1250), St. Raymond of Pennafort, O.P. (1175-1275), Ioannes Rumsik of Fribourg, O.P. (d. 1314), Bartholomaeus of Pisa, O.P. (d. 1347), Angelus of Clavasio or Carleti, O.M. (d. 1493), Trovamala, O.M. (d. 1495), Tabiena, O.P. (d. 1521), Sylvester Prierias, O.P. (d. 1523), Bartholomaeus Fumus, O.P. (d. 1545), and Bartholomaeus of St. Faustus, O. Cist. (1571-1639), are read to have written. To the same genus belong Ioannes Nider, O.P. (d. 1438), Formicarius, Tr. de 10 Praeceptis, and Consolatorium timoratae conscientiae; St. Antoninus, O.P. (1384-1459), Summula confessionis; Cajetan, O.P. (1469-1534), Summula Peccatorum; Bartholomaeus de Medina, O.P. (1528-1581), Brevis instructio de Poenitentia; Azpilcueta, Doctor Navarrus (d. 1586), Manuale confessariorum; Lopez, O.P. (d. 1596), Instructorium conscientiae; Binsfeld (d. 1598), Enchiridion Theologiae pastoralis; Martin Fornari, S.I. (1547-1612), Institutio Confessariorum; Loth, O.P. (d. 1652), Resolutiones theologicae; Stoz, S.I. (d. 1678), Tribunal Poenitentiae; Antonius a Spiritu Sancto, O. Carm. (d. 1677), Directorium Confessariorum; Segneri, S.I. (d. 1694), Parochus instructus, Confessarius instructus, Poenitens instructus; Lohner, S.I. (d. 1697), Instructio de conversatione apostolica, Instructio pastorum; Reuter, S.I. (1680-1762), Neo-Confessarius practice instructus; Wigandt, O.P. (d. 1708), Tribunal Confessariorum; Gaume (1802-1879), Manuel des Confesseurs. Several Saints also, besides those already cited, have deserved well of pastoral theology, as St. Charles Borromeo (d. 1584), writing an instruction of pastors, and St. Francis de Sales (d. 1622), an instruction to confessors; but especially St. Alphonsus (1696-1787). Here also can be referred works of Moral Theology of a more practical character, such as Lacroix, S.I. (1652-1714), and Sporer, O.M. (d. 1708); or cases of conscience, such as Toletus, S.I. (1532-1596), Bartholomaeus a Ledesma, O.P. (d. 1604), Bianchis, O.P. (d. 1622), Nazarius, O.P. (1556-1646), Pontas (1638-1728), and P. Van der Velden, O.M. (d. 1857), resolved in the work: Praxis administrandi sacramentum Poenitentiae.

In more recent time special treatises of pastoral theology have already been published, such as, among many others, Alberti, Sailer (d. 1832), Benger (d. 1870), Gassner, Amberger (d. 1889), Schuech (d. 1893), Pruner (d. 1907), William Stang (an American), Goepfert (d. 1913), Krieg, etc., wrote; but more specially in order to the practice of the confessional: Zenner (d. 1861), Tappehorn (d. 1906), Probst. For our purpose, however, let the following be held as specially commended: St. Alphonsus, Praxis confessariorum and Silva Rerum praedicabilium; Aertnijs, C.SS.R., Theologia Pastoralis; Berardi, Praxis Confessariorum; Reuter-Lehmkuhl-Umberg, S.I., Neo-Confessarius practice instructus; Frassinetti, Compendium Th. Moralis; Schneider, Manuale Sacerdotum; to which we wish to add more practical modern moral manuals, such as Aertnijs and Marc from the C.SS.R.; Haine and Theol. Mechliniensis; Lehmkuhl, Genicot-Salsmans, Noldin-Schmitt, and Vermeersch from the S.I.; Tanquerey, S.S.; and Prummer from the O.P.; or also collections of cases of conscience such as were made by Gury, Lehmkuhl, Genicot, and Villada.

Concerning Various Categories of Penitents

I. The present treatment pertains to the final part of the doctrine concerning Penance, where the subject of this sacrament is discussed.

Now the subject of Penance is every and only wayfarer man, baptized, a sinner, truly contrite, and confessing in some manner. He must be:

1. a wayfarer man, because the sacraments were instituted for him alone;

2. baptized, because Baptism renders persons capable of receiving the other sacraments, which otherwise would be received invalidly;

3. a sinner, that is, one who after Baptism has committed at least a venial sin, because the virtue of penance is only concerning actual personal sin, and the sacrament of penance was instituted for the remission of sins committed after Baptism; but if he were not a sinner, the words of absolution would not be verified and absolution would be invalid;

4. contrite, at least by imperfect contrition; otherwise he would not truly be penitent, since contrition is the principal and essential act of penance, without which it is impossible to obtain remission of actual sin;

5. confessing in some manner, or externally accusing himself of being a sinner. For without an external accusation the sins and dispositions of the penitent would be unknown to the minister, who would not be able to exercise judgment; but any external accusation whatever, even a minimal one, suffices for this in circumstances in which a greater integrity of confession is impossible.

II. All the foregoing things are clear from the doctrine concerning the virtue and sacrament of penance. Hence, in the present matter, an application must be made of the principles set forth in the whole treatise concerning penance to the various categories of penitents which can present special difficulties.

The categories can be divided according to the particular dispositions of penitents; the condition of the body, or of the soul; the state of life; or the kind of sin.

But we limit the exposition of the present little work to the three former kinds of classes; perhaps we shall treat of the remaining ones at a future time.

III. Moreover, the questions to be treated can be reduced to the following:

I. Concerning penitents variously disposed:

1. Concerning penitents who are to be directed in the examination of conscience.

2. Concerning penitents who are to be interrogated.

3. Concerning penitents who are to be instructed and admonished.

4. Concerning customary sinners and recidivists.

5. Concerning those in occasions of sin.

6. Concerning penitents who are to be obliged or induced to a new or general confession.

II. Concerning penitents various according to the condition of the body:

1. Concerning children.

2. Concerning the half-witted and deaf-mutes.

3. Concerning adolescents and young persons.

4. Concerning men and women.

5. Concerning abnormal persons.

6. Concerning the sick and the dying.

7. Concerning the incarcerated and those condemned to death.

III. Concerning penitents various according to the condition of the soul:

1. Concerning the pious and devout.

2. Concerning the perfect and contemplative.

3. Concerning the tempted.

4. Concerning the scrupulous.

5. Concerning the lax.

6. Concerning the worldly.

7. Concerning the learned and persons of distinguished condition.

8. Concerning the excommunicated.

Chapter I: Concerning Penitents Variously Disposed

Question I: Concerning Penitents Who Are to Be Directed in the Examination of Conscience

I. Obligation of the penitent. - The penitent is bound regularly, and indeed of itself under grave obligation, to premise to confession a diligent examination of all mortal sins which he has committed.

It is said: a) of itself and regularly. For exception is made 1) if time is lacking, as can occur in the dying; 2) if the examination is not necessary, the dispositions of the penitent being considered;

b) mortal sins: for one who is morally certain that he has not sinned mortally since his last confession is not strictly bound to a diligent examination, but only to discovering sufficient matter for the validity of the sacrament; although he is also to be exhorted to a diligent examination concerning venial sins, that he may receive more abundant fruits from the sacrament.

It is proved: 1) from the Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 5: "From these things it is gathered that penitents must recount in confession all mortal sins of which, after diligent examination, they have consciousness." And surely, without such an examination they could not explore all the recesses of their soul, as the same Council says;

2. by reason: He who is bound to the end is, by that very fact, bound to the means of itself necessary for attaining the end. But a diligent examination, regularly speaking, is a necessary means for procuring the integrity of confession for those who have sinned gravely; for if they have committed several mortal sins, generally they cannot remember them all, because of the weakness of human memory, unless for some time they have diligently explored their conscience. Therefore one who has sinned gravely is regularly bound to a diligent examination of conscience.[1]

[1] Cf. Reuter, *Neo-Conf.*, p. I, c. 3, n. 4; St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, n. 471; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1703-1704; *Theol. Mech.* (4), de Poen., nn. 47 and 48; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 446-450; Tanquerey, de Poen., nn. 312-316; Genicot, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 301-303; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 277-278; Prummer, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 383-385.

II. The diligence required is not the highest, than which no greater can be given, and which is used by the most cautious men in matters of the greatest moment: for this would be too burdensome and would render the sacrament odious; but ordinary or moderate diligence, which prudent men are accustomed to use in a grave matter. "For this," we read in St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, n. 471, 1°, "moderate diligence suffices, such as a prudent man uses in arduous business; or such as, morally speaking, the learned and God-fearing are accustomed to use, even if someone should think that, with greater diligence, he would find more."

This, however, must be estimated according to the capacity and condition (or diversity of state) of the penitent and other circumstances. Greater diligence is required a) the longer the penitent has abstained from confession; b) the more numerous and diverse the mortal sins he has committed; c)

the less account he has kept of things committed; d) the more learned and instructed he is: for the rude, unlearned, and uncultivated are incapable of an accurate examination.

Hence 1) ordinarily it suffices successively to run through the precepts of God and of the Church, the capital sins, and the obligations of one's proper state (on which one must insist, since there are many who scarcely think of the duties of their proper state); but if someone has confessed a short time before, it also suffices to examine himself concerning duties toward God, neighbor, and himself.

2. Those who confess frequently, rarely commit mortal sins, and daily examine their conscience, can be content with a shorter examination, because grave sins, if they have committed them, will easily occur to memory. Although they are to be led to a diligent examination, that they may discover venial sins, and also their causes and occasions, so that they may more easily extirpate defects.

3. The scrupulous ought not spend a long time in examination, because they are not accustomed to sin gravely, and moreover a minute examination can increase scruples and doubts; but if they had sinned gravely, this surely would be before their eyes.

4. The sick are not bound to an examination as accurate as those in good health; indeed sometimes they are excused from every examination, because of excessive weakness. In that case they are to be questioned briefly by the confessor himself concerning substantial matters. When they have survived, afterward they can complete their confession, if it is necessary.

III. Office of the confessor. - The confessor can, indeed sometimes must, direct penitents in the examination of conscience or supply for it, and also himself procure the integrity of confession.

He can act thus from charity; although, that they may examine their conscience more accurately, he can kindly dismiss those who are sufficiently instructed, especially if it is a question of a long confession, since it is almost impossible that they respond accurately to a questioning confessor without a previous examination. Besides, penitents of themselves are bound to the examination of conscience; to the confessor belongs only the judgment concerning the sufficiency of the examination. But from charity he must act thus toward those who otherwise are foreseen not to be going to return, especially toward the rude and ignorant, who cannot examine themselves otherwise.

IV. Catalogue of questions concerning sins to be accused. - Since certain moralists construct a long catalogue of sins and series of questions, useless and inept, lest the sacrament of Penance be rendered odious, it is pleasing here to add a schema of questions which can be proposed to penitents for supplying for the examination of their conscience and which, in ordinary circumstances, are abundantly sufficient.[2]

[2] Not only is the strict manner of questioning to be disapproved, such as was in use among certain Rigorists and can be found in Dens, in the appendix to the treatise on Penance; but even among recent authors, longer questions or inopportune questions are sometimes handed down: thus several, in Noldin and in Gury, as to the theological virtues or religion, and, for the latter, as to homicide and duel (!); indeed in Aertnijs, in *Th. Past.*, questions concerning the sixth seem to descend into excessively minute circumstances.

They are to be questioned opportunely according to the circumstances:

A. Concerning the sacraments previously received: concerning the penance fulfilled; and, if they rarely receive the sacraments, concerning sacrileges on account of concealment, concerning their number, concerning the time during which they adverted to the sacrilege, and concerning the paschal communion not performed. But it is better to ask in this way: Have you any anguish of conscience concerning your past life? Now make a good confession; say everything ingenuously; do not fear; unload your conscience.

B. Concerning the precepts of the Decalogue. Regarding the 1st: whether the penitent knows the four principal mysteries of faith; whether he knows those things which are of necessity of precept; whether he has for a long time omitted all prayer; whether he has not exposed the faith to danger (by reading, association, conversations, occasion), or cooperated in works against the faith.

Concerning superstitions (e.g., Spiritism), one must not ask unless in regions where they are common, or unless there is a special reason for estimating that the penitent is guilty of them.

Regarding the 2nd: whether he has blasphemed; whether with the intention of blaspheming, and whether he has thus given scandal; what formula he used; but if he has erred concerning the sense of the formula, he is to be instructed; likewise whether he has murmured against God and the dispositions of Providence.

Likewise, whether he has sworn vainly or falsely, and whether he has thereby brought harm to his neighbor.

They are not to be questioned concerning vows unless they are pious penitents, who still more often confuse these with resolutions.

Regarding the 3rd: whether he has omitted hearing Mass deliberately, or because of some necessity; whether he has not been negligent in coming late to Mass; whether he has done or commanded servile works without necessity, and for how long, whether also publicly.

Regarding the 4th: children concerning love, reverence, and obedience toward parents, and whether they have not gravely failed against them, treated parents harshly, or saddened them; parents concerning the education of children, religious instruction, correction and vigilance, and good example, etc.

Regarding the 5th: whether the penitent has held anyone in hatred; whether he has wished or imprecated evils upon him, and whether seriously, and what things he wished to inflict upon him. Whether he has not given bad example, induced another to sin, used another for executing sin, cooperated in another's sin. Whether he has been angry with his neighbor, and if he says yes, whether he committed anything by deed (quarrel, striking, wounding). Whether he has given himself to drunkenness.

Regarding the 6th and 9th: whether he has a tranquil conscience as to modesty and purity; whether he has taken delight in impure thoughts, and voluntarily; whether he has had desires, and to do what sort of act; whether he has had or willingly heard obscene conversations, or read obscene books; whether he has been indecently dressed; whether he has had looks or touches, lascivious kisses or embraces, and whether they were mutual; whether he experienced an effect, e.g., more or less vehement motions of the flesh, seminal emission in a man, full satisfaction in a woman; whether he has committed a shameful act, alone, with another, of the opposite sex or of the same sex (a free or

bound person), e.g.: whether he sinned with a boy or with a girl; whether he did the conjugal act ("have you committed the sin?"); whether the act has had consequences or will have fruit ("has that had consequences?") and why not?

Concerning sodomy and bestiality, questions are not to be made, lest penitents learn them or be scandalized; unless there is altogether a grave reason for estimating that the penitent has committed such things (e.g., if the presence of an animal was an occasion of sin; or, for those who have accused themselves of seminal emission had with another: whether they did something worse).

Concerning onanism, however, spouses are to be questioned: whether they have rightly fulfilled the duties of matrimony, and if they hesitate or deny, whether they have conformed themselves to the laws of nature; whether they have done nothing against the end of matrimony, the fruitfulness and sanctity of matrimony; whether they do not abuse matrimony; whether they have committed themselves totally to divine providence concerning the generation of children, conformed themselves to the will of God as to the number of children, and did not intend to limit the number of infants; whether they have not distrusted divine providence from fear of increasing offspring (how many children do you have?), etc., where precise and well-determined questions are to be preferred to indeterminate and excessively vague ones.

Regarding the 7th and 10th: whether the penitent has committed injustice, retains anything unjustly; whether he has unjustly brought about harm; whether he has deceived; whether he has neglected to pay debts (restitution).

Regarding the 8th: whether he has spoken evil of his neighbor, whether great or small, false or true, hidden or widely known (reparation); whether he has thought evils concerning his neighbor; whether he has affected him with injurious words, whether with grave injuries; whether he has lied.

C. Concerning the precepts of the Church: concerning the observance of feasts, abstinence from meats, annual confession and communion.

D. Concerning duties of state: parents concerning children, as has been said; spouses concerning mutual fidelity, love, peaceful life, and duties (e.g., whether perhaps they have anything which gnaws the conscience concerning marriage, whether they are of one mind between themselves, whether the husband keeps faith with his wife, whether the wife obeys her husband in all honest things, whether she does not render life troublesome to her husband, whether she has care of the domestic matter, whether the husband does not squander goods); masters concerning vigilance exercised over servants and concerning negligence in removing scandals from them, and concerning the just wage paid; servants and workers concerning work performed or neglected, harm brought about, petty thefts, labor on Sunday; children, whether they have concealed anything out of shame, and have had dishonorable games, e.g., things which they would not dare to do under the eyes of others; likewise adolescents and girls, especially if they love adornment: then they are to be questioned whether they have associated familiarly, too freely, etc., with persons of the other sex; tavern-keepers, whether they have tolerated sins (blasphemies, foul speech, detractions), whether in some way they have cooperated in the sins of others (by giving drink, obscene pictures, a room); merchants concerning exaggerated price, deceit and fraud in commerce, with grave harm of neighbor; soldiers concerning blasphemies, omission of the duties of religion, quarrels, sins of lust and thefts; tailors concerning little pieces of cloth retained, etc.

These questions are not always all to be made, but according to the state, condition, and capacity of the penitent, and the answers which he has given.

V. Observation. - It is best to institute an examination of conscience every day.

Question II: Concerning Penitents Who Are to Be Questioned

I. Obligation of questioning. - There is an obligation, of itself grave, of questioning penitents, as is proved in the Treatise on Penance, where it treats of the minister. The omission of questioning redounds to the detriment of souls, or to the prejudice of the sacrament:[1]

[1] Cf. Marc, *Th. M.*, II, n. 1804.

A. to the detriment of souls: 1) because it furnishes an occasion for many sacrilegious confessions, since there are many penitents who, unless they are questioned, pass over graver sins: "frequently," says St. Thomas, "those things which the penitent would keep silent because of shame, when questioned he reveals" (IV Sent., d. 19, qu. 2, art. 3, exp. textus);

2. because it is the cause that many penitents lack opportune remedies against relapse; for the confessor who does not question concerning the causes, occasions, and habit of sins, concerning diligence in amendment used or omitted, cannot prudently indicate the opportune means by which new falls may be forestalled;

3. because harm is easily brought upon others also, from the fact that the penitent does not remove scandal, or neglects the duties of his state, e.g., in the education and custody of children;

B. to the prejudice of the sacrament, whose integrity is exposed to danger, indeed also its validity, since often it cannot prudently be judged whether the penitent is disposed, or whether he needs a more ardent exhortation that he may be duly disposed.

II. What questions are to be made. - Questions are to be made only when, and insofar as, they are necessary for procuring the validity of the sacrament, the integrity of confession, or the amendment of the sinner:[2]

[2] Ibid., n. 1803.

1. for procuring the validity of the sacrament, e.g., for knowing whether there is sufficient matter of confession, whether the penitent conceals something out of shame, as often happens in boys and girls, whether the penitent is sufficiently disposed;

2. for the integrity of confession, e.g., concerning the number, species, and circumstances changing the species of sins; or concerning sins of which penitents are not accustomed to accuse themselves, as concerning internal sins, concerning omission of the duties of state;

3. for the correction of the penitent, e.g., concerning the cause and occasion of sins, frequency, gravity, malice, etc.

Nevertheless not all are to be questioned, but only those for whom, whether from the manner of confessing, or from the common state or condition of the person, there is for the confessor a special

reason for conjecturing that one of the aforesaid defects is present.

III. Norms to be attended to. - From what has been said the following norms are understood:[3]

[3] Cf. Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, n. 276; Tanquerey, de Poen., n. 468. In referring to the author Aertnijs, we follow the earlier editions, not those which were made under the care of Father Damen.

A. Concerning penitents to be questioned: 1) The confessor is not bound to question penitents who, on the one hand, seem sufficiently instructed, and on the other, are diligent in confessing, such as clerics or religious are accustomed to be, and those who frequently receive the sacraments; unless, however, in some case from their accusation there arises a probability that something necessary to be known is being omitted.

2. On the contrary, ordinarily those are to be questioned who rarely approach the sacred tribunal, especially if they seem little instructed, because it is deservedly presumed that their accusation is not integral.

3. The practice of those who never question penitents, as though they erected this into a principle, is to be disapproved; indeed, they do not even allow them to bring confession to its end, but, after a few sins have been heard, immediately impart absolution. Such a manner of acting often troubles souls, far from tranquilizing them, and is the reason why even grave sins are kept silent; accordingly, generally, and unless it is a question of the scrupulous, it is to be disapproved even for those who accuse only venial sins, for a mortal sin can be left for the end of confession.

B. Concerning solicitude in questioning: 1) The confessor is not bound to a greater solicitude in questioning than penitents are in confessing; indeed, strictly speaking, he is rather bound to a lesser one, since the integrity of confession directly obliges the penitent and only indirectly the confessor.

2. The confessor therefore is not bound to use anything except ordinary and moderate diligence, which is proportioned to the diverse capacity of penitents. Thus the rude and uncultivated man is not to be examined as accurately as the well-instructed one, nor the sick man as the healthy and robust, because the former are not obliged to so minute an examination.

3. Ordinary diligence having been used, the confessor does not sin who abstains from further questions, lest he render confession odious, although he foresees that by greater diligence more sins could be discovered: for it is better that confession lack material integrity than that it become odious to many.

C. Concerning the gravity of the obligation: The obligation of questioning is of itself grave; nevertheless, if, from slight negligence, inadvertence, instability of memory, or distraction, or weariness, the confessor omits to inquire into something which of itself is necessary for the integrity of confession or for the amendment of the penitent, there will be no sin or a light sin: for he is not bound with so much difficulty or even moral impossibility to supply the defects of others; but when many confessions are being heard, it is morally impossible always to avoid these defects.

IV. Qualities of questions. - Questions must have three qualities: they must be moderate, discreet, and opportune.[4] St. Thomas already teaches, l. c.:

[4] Cf. Reuter, *Neo-Conf.*, p. I, c. II, n. 3; *Theol. Mechl.* (4), de Poen., n. 48, p. 132 sq.; Billuart, de Poen., diss. 6, a. 10, § 2; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, n. 277; *Th. P.*, n. 27 sq.; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1806-1807; Tanquerey, de Poen., nn. 467-471; Berardi, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 1085-1106; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 542-546; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 395-396.

"The priest must search out the conscience of the sinner in confession as a physician the wound and a judge the cause, because frequently those things which the one confessing would keep silent because of shame, when questioned he reveals. But nevertheless in making questions three things must be attended to:

1. that each sinner be questioned concerning the sins which are accustomed to abound in men of that condition, so that... a soldier is not asked concerning the sin of clerics, or conversely;

2. that no explicit question be made concerning sins, except concerning those which are known to all; concerning others... a question must be made from afar, so that, if he has committed it, he may say it; if he has not committed it, he may not learn it;

3. that, in sins chiefly carnal, he not descend too much to particular circumstances that are not necessary... lest he harm himself and the penitent," or impede the latter in confession, or render the sacrament of Penance odious.

Therefore a question must be:

A. moderate, that is, not concerning curious or useless matters, foreign to confession, but only concerning those which regard conscience; nor even with questions multiplied too much: for excessive questions are accustomed to exasperate penitents and to excite a suspicion of curiosity against the confessor.

Hence: 1) let the confessor not question concerning all sins, but only concerning those which have likely been committed by the penitent according to each one's condition and disposition;

2. likewise let him question each one according to his capacity and knowledge, but not according to the knowledge with which the confessor himself is furnished. Therefore in vain will he seek from ordinary penitents the more minute specific and numerical distinctions of sins, which are not accustomed to be discerned by such persons; likewise from those who have not confessed for a long time, a determined number of sins; likewise from children little developed, the ignorant, the half-witted, etc., more than a confused knowledge of sins: for the more he questions, the less these understand;

3. ordinarily it is not expedient to ask from the rude their own judgment concerning their sins, and by name whether they held a sin committed by them as mortal; for not rarely they will answer not according to the truth of the matter, but according to that which occurs to their mind. In certain cases, however, especially in the matter of chastity, and chiefly if it is feared that the penitent would be scandalized by a direct question, it can be asked whether, in doing that, he was conscious that he was sinning gravely.

4. But let a few questions be made, not obscure but clear, according to the grasp of the penitent; not too general, but concrete; not long but brief, and to be repeated in changed terms.

And that suffices even if the confessor cannot thus form a certain judgment concerning the gravity or lightness of the sins which he has heard; for it suffices to have sufficient knowledge concerning the dispositions of the penitent, to use ordinary diligence in searching out sins, and to form a serious and prudent judgment about them, as far as he can. But if he has erred in that judgment, absolution is nevertheless valid.

B. Discreet or prudent, both in the matters concerning which he is questioned, and in the manner of questioning, by avoiding all things which can probably scandalize penitents, or be the cause of exciting curiosity, offense, or temptation, or of introducing suspicion toward the confessor, or of teaching those things which it is better to ignore. This had often to be attended to in relation to blasphemies and simonies; now especially in relation to frauds and injustices, to superstitions, to means of bringing about death or procuring abortion, etc.; most especially in the matter of chastity, above all with regard to women, or with regard to younger persons who perhaps do not know sins of this kind. And yet, because it is established by experience that sins of lust are not easily accused by some unless they are questioned concerning them, certain few and cautious questions even about them are to be prudently proposed; but in such a way that the rule handed down by all is preserved: it is better to be deficient in questions as to the material integrity of confession than to abound with probable scandal and the ruin of the penitent.

Hence: 1) let the confessor first use general terms, so that if the penitent is guilty, he may understand; but if innocent, he may learn nothing new, e.g., have you sinned against modesty, decency, purity?

2. with younger persons, who are presumed innocent, let those proper words which can excite dangerous curiosity be carefully avoided, such as: seminal emission, fornication, sodomy, bestiality, onanism, etc.;

3. even with regard to the married, let it be asked whether they have fulfilled mutual duties, without explicit mention being made of the marital debt, or whether anything bites them in conscience regarding the use of marriage. If they answer negatively, nothing further is to be asked unless there is a special reason; if affirmatively, it suffices to propose those questions by which it is known whether they voluntarily use means preventing conception or birth;

4. ordinarily, and especially if there is suspicion that a sin is being concealed from ignorance or simplicity, it is expedient to begin the question from lighter sins and gradually pass to graver ones, e.g., first concerning thoughts (but if they deny these, one must not continue), then concerning words heard or uttered, looks, excessive familiarities, touches, or also concerning something worse: with oneself, with others, of the other or same sex, and so forth;

5. sometimes, however, namely if there is suspicion that a sin is being concealed from shame or fear, it is expedient to begin from greater ones; when these have been accused, the remaining things are easily declared. And so also among the more rude and ignorant, who deny thoughts or even desires, but confess words and deeds, because they do not know that internal sins are to be declared, or do not equally acknowledge or advert to them. Hence if they affirm external sins, it is further asked whether, apart from the actions committed, they also thought about these things or had a desire.

C. opportune, that is, made at a convenient time and in a convenient manner, namely with kind and peaceful words, lest the penitent be offended or, seized by fear, not dare to answer.

1. Before confession: a) if the penitent is unknown, let him be asked in a few kind words from what time he has confessed, whether he was absolved, whether he is perfectly quiet concerning his past life.

b) if he is disquieted, let him be fatherly induced to explain the cause of anxiety, by saying that all sins, even the gravest, are remitted to the contrite of heart, and that every anxiety is put away by sincere confession.

c) questions can also be made concerning state and condition; but often they are better made in the course of confession, when opportunity is given, lest from the beginning the penitent be frightened by questions, or a suspicion of curiosity arise.

2. In the very act of confession: a) if the penitent does not begin of his own accord, let the confessor kindly ask what evil he has admitted since the other confession.

b) during the accusation, let him first permit the penitent to explain himself without interruption, except that sometimes by one or another word he may help him to proceed with confidence. He will be able to propose only a few rare and brief questions, e.g., concerning number and circumstances changing the species; but let him not interrupt the penitent too frequently, so that the latter may be able to confess all things in order, nor may several things fall from his memory. Hence, for the most part, it will be better to defer questions, at least longer ones, to the end.

c) let him patiently and kindly hear even the gravest sins, without any sign of astonishment or horror, but gently interpose certain things concerning divine mercy. Let him admonish one who accuses himself of useless matters that it is not necessary to say those things. Let him help one who accuses himself hesitantly or with difficulty by a few questions.

d) let him abstain from all rebuke and correction before the confession is finished.

3. After the confession has been heard: a) by running through the declarations, the penitent must be questioned concerning those things which he likely omitted; or also concerning the occasion, causes, and habit of sins, so that judgment can be made concerning dispositions and due remedies.

b) among the rude who rarely confess, it must be examined whether they grieve for sins from the soul, and whether they have a serious purpose of avoiding them.

c) from unknown persons let it be asked whether anything troubles their conscience, or whether they have omitted anything in confession.

d) the same thing is often useful with the timid, after the questioning, immediately before they are absolved, to ask with fatherly affection: for there are some who do not uncover all things until after the confessor has won confidence for himself by kindness.

e) finally, those who at last accuse sins previously concealed are to be treated most gently, and to be induced that they grieve not only concerning their sins, but also concerning the malice of concealing

them.

V. Observations.

1. Especially to be questioned are the rude who are judged not to have searched their conscience sufficiently. For this the schema handed down above, qu. 1, n. IV, can be of service.

2. Sometimes penitents ask to be questioned by the confessor. If he detects that this happens from a grave defect of examination, or from vain curiosity, let him fatherly correct the penitent; indeed he can dismiss him, unless the spiritual necessity of the same counsels otherwise.

3. If someone is so rude and dull that he accuses no sin, not even from his past life, even after repeated questions, after questions concerning those things to be known by necessity of means, and the recitation of the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, he can sometimes be absolved, at least under condition, at least if it is thought that perhaps he needs absolution. For, for valid absolution, when otherwise the penitent cannot accuse himself, it suffices that by signs he confesses himself a sinner, which he does by presenting himself before the confessor in the tribunal of Penance.

4. Even more cultivated persons (such as physicians, judges, advocates, priests, confessors, parish priests) are to be questioned concerning the duties of state, but only if consciences have been neglected, or if the confessor otherwise has a founded doubt lest they fail in their duties, e.g., physicians concerning the care and visitation of the sick, concerning illicit means commended, concerning negligence in admonishing about the reception of the sacraments; judges and advocates concerning an unjust sentence pronounced or a cause defended, and concerning harms brought about; priests concerning the breviary, burdens of Masses discharged at the due time, study necessary for confessions, excessive rigor or kindness toward penitents, alms distributed, catechism, preaching, visitation of the sick, fatherly correction; religious women concerning vows, especially of poverty, concerning peculiar duties, dangerous friendships, aversion, and, if she is a superior, concerning vigilance and abuses in the monastery.[5]

[5] Cf. Aertnijs, *Theol. Past.*, n. 41 sq.

Question III: Concerning Penitents Who Are to Be Instructed and Admonished

I. Obligation of instructing and admonishing. - The confessor, from his office, is bound under grave obligation:

1. As minister of the sacrament, to instruct the penitent, not indeed concerning all things which the latter is bound to know, but concerning those things which he is bound to know in order here and now rightly, that is, validly and fruitfully, to receive the sacrament; unless, however, absolution can be deferred to another time.

2. As teacher and physician, who ought to direct in the way of salvation, at least to admonish the penitent concerning matters which he is bound to know and to do, or concerning other truths and obligations which he ought to know, so that he may learn or fulfill them.[1]

[1] Cf. Reuter, o. c., p. I, c. IV, nn. 5-9; St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, nn. 608-616; Billuart, de Poen., diss. 6, a. 10, § 3; Berardi, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 1107-1114; Tanquerey, o. c., nn. 473-478; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), nn. 78-79; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 571-576; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 63-66; Ballerini-Palmieri, de Poen., nn. 811-831; Genicot, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 357-359; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 393-394.

II. Instruction and admonition always to be made before absolution. - From this it is clear concerning what things in particular penitents must always be instructed or admonished before absolution, namely:

1. Those who culpably or inculpably are ignorant of truths certainly to be believed by necessity of means (namely, that God exists and that He is a supernatural rewarder) are absolutely to be instructed before absolution, as being incapable of contrition, justification, and absolution. Likewise, generally, those who are ignorant of truths probably to be believed by necessity of means (God triune, and the Son incarnate and redeemer), because in doubt concerning means necessary to the end, especially to the ultimate end, eternal salvation, the safer part is to be chosen; unless, however, there is extreme necessity in which it is impossible to instruct the dying person concerning these things. In that case, the other necessary things being given, he must be absolved under condition: if you are capable; and if he survives, he is to be instructed and absolved again. It should be noted, however, that a very developed or scientific knowledge of these mysteries is not required, but that it suffices that it be believed that there are three distinct ones (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) who are one God, and that the Son of God, having become man, redeemed us by His death; these things can easily be taught. But if someone cannot retain them, it suffices to recall them in confession.

2. Likewise those are to be instructed or admonished before absolution who are ignorant of, or do not have, the dispositions necessary for receiving the sacrament validly or licitly and fruitfully, namely contrition, a firm purpose, and the mode of confessing integrally; for otherwise they are exposed to the danger of receiving absolution invalidly or illicitly.

3. Likewise those who are ignorant of necessary things to be known by necessity of precept (the Symbol, the Decalogue, the precepts of the Church, the sacraments to be received by them, the Lord's prayer, and other things necessary for establishing a right Christian life) are to be admonished. But they can be absolved if they grieve for negligence and seriously promise to learn these things as soon as possible; for then they are sufficiently disposed. But if they have several times promised in vain, it must be examined whether absolution should be deferred because of defect or doubt of purpose. But if all means of learning these things are lacking to the penitent, from charity the confessor can be bound to teach him, and, if he is a parish priest, from justice; and therefore the place and time for receiving instruction are to be designated.

4. Likewise those who are ignorant of the things necessary for rightly fulfilling their office are, of themselves and generally, not to be absolved unless they are prepared to relinquish their office (of judge, physician, advocate, confessor, parish priest), or to acquire the required knowledge, and meanwhile to abstain from exercising those things by which grave harm could probably be brought upon the neighbor. Otherwise they would be indisposed, as exposing themselves to the proximate danger of causing grave harm. Sometimes, however, the admonition concerning leaving the office can be omitted, if it is not hoped that it will be profitable and scandal is

lacking; but the obligation of acquiring the necessary knowledge as soon as possible must always be urged.

5. Likewise, before absolution, penitents are to be admonished concerning obligations which result from their sins (unless in good faith they are ignorant and certainly will not act, nor is a greater evil feared otherwise), such as the obligation of restoring reputation, honor, or goods; the obligation of avoiding proximate occasions of sin; the obligation of laying aside grave hatred, reconciling oneself with an enemy, repairing scandal, etc. These the confessor should impose in such a way that he does not give ear to the vain pretexts of penitents, but prescribes them as an essential condition of absolution.

III. Admonition regularly to be made, and at an opportune time. - It is also clear concerning what things penitents (who labor under ignorance or an erroneous conscience) are regularly to be admonished, but with prudence, and not necessarily before absolution, but at an opportune time:

1. Those who exaggerate evil for themselves and judge that to be evil which is not, or to be graver than it is, e.g., that to be mortal which is venial: for then the error is harmful, as being the cause of formal sin, and it is to be removed. This is true even if it is foreseen that from this they will more often commit venial sins; for it is better to permit innumerable venial sins than one mortal sin, as St. Alphonsus notes, *Th. M.*, l. III, c. V, n. 130; and the confessor by his admonition will forestall such a multiplication of relapse.

2. Likewise those who diminish evil and judge licit what is evil, or less evil than it is, e.g., that to be venial which is mortal, and who are not in good faith, but whose ignorance is vincible and gravely culpable; as if they doubt or inquire, which is a sign of doubtful faith. Then in them there is culpable negligence, and they are not excused from sin, from which therefore they are to be rescued by every effort.[2]

[2] Let it be noted: 1) only sometimes, and altogether more rarely, if a greater sin is certainly feared, the confessor perhaps can dissemble the truth and say nothing, as if he had not heard the question, provided that from this he is not thought to approve the evil; 2) nevertheless he is not bound to say more than is necessary or than he is asked. For example, if one bound by a simple vow of chastity asks whether the marriage was therefore invalid, let him answer negatively, remaining silent concerning the debt; if the penitent asks whether he must render the debt to the spouse, let him answer affirmatively, remaining silent concerning the obligation not to ask. Cf. St. Alphonsus, *Theol. Mor.*, l. VI, n. 616; Reuter, *Neo-conf.*, p. I, c. IV, n. 7.

3. Likewise those who so judge from invincible ignorance, if that ignorance cannot remain for long, as if it is a question of first principles and first conclusions of natural law and of obvious duties of state (e.g., concerning the education of children), in one word, concerning those things which cannot be ignored for long.

4. Likewise those who err from invincible ignorance, or from ignorance not gravely culpable, if admonition is foreseen likely to be profitable, at least after some time, or if there is not a grave and serious reason for doubting this; unless sometimes greater evils would have to be feared. For the office of the confessor is to instruct penitents concerning obligations, if it can be done without grave inconvenience; but admonition must be omitted if formal sin in others or grave harms would arise. Hence the penitent who in good faith has contracted marriage invalidly

generally is not to be admonished before the marriage can be revalidated, lest perhaps meanwhile he sin formally; indeed even if he is going to receive the admonition, but at the same time formal sins are foreseen in others, e.g., in the spouse, or grave harms, e.g., in the children.

5. Likewise those who err from invincible ignorance are to be admonished, even if the admonition will not be profitable, provided that omission of the admonition harms the common good, as if it is a question of scandal or of grave temporal or spiritual harm which the whole community is going to suffer from the neglect of a superior; e.g., if silence would be the cause that reading depraved books, frequenting dances, entry into the Masonic sect, or the practice of onanism would be believed or said not to be illicit, because confessors seem to oppose them little.

6. Likewise if invincible error does not harm the common good but harms the penitent himself, as if it brings danger to salvation, e.g., if it is concerned with means perhaps necessary for salvation or absolution, or if it introduces the danger of founding a depraved habit from which afterward he will free himself only with difficulty, such as fornication or self-abuse.

On the contrary, admonition is not to be made if there is no hope of amendment and the ignorance is involuntary and not more harmful to the penitent, to others, or to the common good; yet this happens not rarely: for of two evils the lesser is to be permitted so that the greater may be avoided. Hence in the concurrence of material and formal sin, the formal is more to be forestalled, for by it alone God is offended.

IV. Observations.

Therefore 1) in judging the opportuneness of admonition, it must be remembered that one mortal sin is graver than many venial sins, one formal sin than all material sins; the spiritual harm of the penitent than the temporal harm of others; the detriment of the common good than the detriment of the particular good of the penitent alone.

The reason of this last is that then the confessor, says St. Alphonsus, *Praxis Conf.*, n. 9, "since he himself has been constituted minister for the good of the Christian republic, is bound to prefer the public good to the private good of the penitent."

2. Civil or ecclesiastical superiors who fail in their proper office with regard to those subject to them are absolutely to be admonished. The reason is both because their ignorance is not easily to be supposed invincible, since each one is bound to know the obvious obligations of his office, and because their ignorance, even invincible, will always be to the harm of the community, while others can easily think that what they see being done by superiors is licit for themselves. (St. Alphonsus, ibidem.)

3. For the same reason, in the case of common harm, those who frequently receive the sacraments are to be admonished, as Benedict XIV teaches (*Bulla Apostolica*, § 20), lest, namely, that which is observed to be practiced by these with impunity be judged licit by others. Nor is it an obstacle that admonition here and now seems to be made uselessly, or even with scandal of the penitent; for such a penitent, when afterward he sees himself absolved by no one, will

more easily be amended; and meanwhile the scandal of others will cease when they see that he is not admitted to the sacraments.

4. That the confessor may gain the confidence of penitents, let him not imprudently impose upon them undue burdens, nor immediately and precipitately respond to counsel sought or doubt proposed. More opportunely he will take time for reflection, or even, if there is no danger of harming the seal, seek the mind of one more learned and wiser.

5. Ignorance is invincible: a) when someone in no way adverts or suspects that the act is evil (or obligatory); b) when someone sometimes doubts concerning this, but in no way adverts or suspects the obligation of examining, neither implicitly nor confusedly; c) when he doubts and seriously examines, but the examination does not make the act appear illicit or the obligation of changing the manner of acting.

On the contrary, it is vincible if it can be overcome by serious examination. For this three things are required: a) doubt concerning the liceity of the action; b) advertence to the obligation of examining, at least implicit; c) negligence of examination.

V. Warning. - From the foregoing it is also evident that penitents are generally to be questioned and admonished concerning onanism: for very many principles demand this. For such a practice a) with difficulty admits invincible ignorance, at least lasting ignorance; b) harms the common good; c) harms the penitent because of the depraved habit which he contracts; d) and if the pious follow it, it causes scandal. Hence they are not to be admonished only in a very rare case. Concerning these things cf. A. Knoch, "L'Onanisme conjugal et le tribunal de la Penitence."

Wherefore those gravely fail in their office who generally neglect to question under the pretext that it is too burdensome, or that the custom of questioning no longer exists, or that the use of onanism here and there is already so general that it is rightly feared that by diligent questioning and by a stricter manner of proceeding many will therefore cease to frequent the sacraments and the church. For the decrees of the Holy Office, the instructions of the bishops of Belgium, and of the Council of Mechlin are clear; nor can they be held as a positive law subject to mutability, but they are nothing other than the authentic interpretation of the natural law. Hence they can never be changed or legitimately go into desuetude, but always and everywhere are to be applied perpetually. Therefore those who do not conform themselves to them, and never or almost never question concerning conjugal onanism, or easily or indiscriminately grant absolution to onanists as though to all, sin gravely.

Most recently the Supreme Pontiff has willed to sanction this by his supreme authority. After he solemnly promulgated: "any use whatever of matrimony in the exercise of which the act, by the industry of men, is deprived of its natural power of procreating life, infringes the law of God and of nature, and those who have committed such a thing are stained by the blemish of grave guilt"; he adds these things for confessors:

"Therefore priests who give their work to hearing confessions, and others who have the care of souls, by Our supreme authority and by Our care for the salvation of all souls, We admonish, that they not permit the faithful entrusted to them to err concerning this most grave law of God, and much more, that they themselves keep themselves immune from false opinions of this sort, and that they in no

way connive in them. But if any confessor or pastor of souls, which God forbid, should himself lead the faithful entrusted to him into these errors, or at least should confirm them in these errors, whether by approving or by deceitfully remaining silent, let him know that he will have to render a severe account to God the Supreme Judge concerning the betrayal of his office, and let him consider as said to himself the words of Christ: they are blind, and leaders of the blind; but if the blind gives guidance to the blind, both fall into the pit."

Since, therefore, several confessors, the admonitions of bishops and the decrees of the Holy Office having been passed over, have in no way changed their lax manner of acting, let us see whether at least they are willing to give ear to the supreme authority of the Supreme Pontiff.

VI. Corollary concerning the rude. - From the things said before it is now sufficiently evident how one must proceed with the rude, without a special question being raised concerning them.[3]

[3] Concerning them Reuter, o. c., nn. 3 and 114-118, and Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 612-614, can be seen.

These persons, in the business of salvation, sometimes are well or better instructed than others, but not always, as can be evident from their accusation and answers. Concerning them let the following rules hold:

1. In accusation they are not immediately, but only when an occasion is given, to be helped, so that first they are permitted to express themselves, as was said q. 2, n. IV, C.

2. If they accuse themselves insufficiently, or this can deservedly be presumed, they are generally not to be dismissed, but are to be examined: by running through the precepts of God and of the Church and the obligations of state, as was said q. 1, n. III and IV.

3. To this end they are also to be questioned, but moderately and according to their capacity, so that the accusation may be completed in the mode in which this is possible for such persons: according to what was said q. 2, n. IV, A.

4. But if they seem unable to institute a sufficiently accurate examination, let the confessor also suggest to them the manner of examining themselves.

5. Those who are not negligent in enumerating sins are to be admonished concerning sorrow and purpose (unless, however, it is evident that in this matter they are solicitous), so that they may seriously weigh the malice of sin, and, motives of contrition having been proposed according to their grasp, may exercise themselves in sorrow: for there are those who think it suffices after confession merely materially to recite the formula of contrition (cf. q. 2, n. IV, C, 3, b; and q. 3, n. II, 2).

6. If some scarcely have anything to accuse (or say nothing particular), it must be examined from what the defect arises:

a) If from a uniform life and continual labor they scarcely have occasion of sinning, and thus easily abstain from graver things and hold light things of little account, they are to be helped so that they may accuse lighter things and, for the security of contrition, accuse a graver sin of their past life.

b) If from defect of examination, they are to be admonished concerning the obligation of examining conscience, and, according to prudence, either dismissed until sufficient preparation, or subjected to an examination of conscience to supply the defect. This, from charity, must often be done if they themselves cannot examine themselves, or if something worse is to be feared, e.g., if it is foreseen that they would be gravely offended or not return (q. 1, n. III).

c) If certain matter is not present, or if they reveal nothing because of imbecility, rudeness of instruction, or dullness, and have not confessed for some months, after sorrow concerning sins in general has been elicited, they will be able to be absolved under condition, at least if it is to be feared that they could be in mortal sin (q. 2, n. V, 3).

d) Such persons, however, are always to be examined concerning necessary things to be known: for if they confess nothing, or know how to answer nothing except that they have sworn or cursed animals, there is a prudent suspicion of crass ignorance. For these persons detestation must be enjoined concerning the fact that they have been negligent in the business of the soul; and the truths of faith must at least be proposed and recalled to memory, so that at least here and now they may know them, if they cannot retain them, just as can easily happen in the old, who knew them before (q. 3, n. II, 1 and 3).

e) With all the aforesaid persons, sorrow and serious purpose must be treated, as we have already said.

7. If they are doubtfully disposed, they are to be seriously admonished and, as far as possible, disposed; but if they remain doubtfully disposed, although of itself absolution should be deferred, nevertheless for these persons, more than for others, there often occurs one of the cases in which they can be absolved under condition, namely so that a greater evil may be avoided, as will be said, q. 4, n. IV, 4.

8. In relation to the satisfaction to be imposed, among other things those which Reuter has (o. c., n. 118) can be useful:

"For rustics and common people, for penances, prayers are almost always to be enjoined, and these usually such that they may discharge them immediately on the same day or on the next feast; unless custom or negligence in divine things counsels something else. Hence if they are negligent in receiving the sacrament of penance, it will usefully be enjoined that after a month or on the next greater feast, or if then they cannot, on the next occasion after it, they confess again. If they have a habit, e.g., of cursing or swearing, for 14 days or for a month let them recite in the morning three times the Our Father and Hail Mary in praise of the Most Holy Trinity; or: let them ask pardon of their sins, offer to God in satisfaction, in a simple manner, their labors and difficulties to be undergone that day, and ask the grace of amendment; or also: in the evening let them repeat the same prayers, grieve and ask pardon, saying, e.g., 'God, be propitious to me, a miserable sinner'; or let it be enjoined upon them that as often as they again curse or swear, they strike the breast and ask pardon; nevertheless they are to be admonished that, if at any time they forget, it suffices that afterward they repair or compensate. If someone were guilty of many grave sins and no other fitting penance occurred, it could be enjoined that for a month, or until the next confession, on Sundays and feasts he devoutly offer to God in satisfaction for his sins the Mass which he already ought to hear, and on

the same days say the rosary (or five decades) at Mass, or as he pleases. It will also be useful, especially if it is feared lest the penitent be deficient in sufficient sorrow and efficacious purpose, to enjoin upon him that before communion he elicit faith, hope, and charity with sorrow, or at least contrition with purpose, and renew these acts after communion and offer them to Christ to be confirmed: for thus he will consult the reverence and fruit of the sacrament, as far as can be done."

Lehmkuhl, however, observes: with rude men and those of inferior condition, the confessor, on the one hand, can sometimes use a more severe manner of acting and speaking by rebuking them, if they are of a harder temperament and given to sins and not diligent in detesting them; on the other hand, he must beware lest he repel them by harshness, but must devote himself so that he may console them and win them for God. For the ruder are offended even by a hard manner of acting and are more deterred than the cultivated; but attracted by kindness and affability, they are formed to good morals with great docility. In one word: let severity be tempered by meekness.

Question IV: Concerning Customary Sinners and Recidivists

I. A customary sinner, or one habituated in sin, is said to be one who has contracted a habit, or a constant internal propensity and facility of committing the same sin, from custom, or from acts frequently repeated.[1] This habit is therefore distinguished

[1] Concerning these, Billuart, de Poen., diss. 6, a. 10, § 6; Reuter, o. c., nn. 175-188; St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, nn. 459-564; *Pr. conf.*, nn. 70-77; Berardi, *opusc. de Recidivis et Occasionariis*; Tanquerey, de Poen., nn. 537-547; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 310-314; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), nn. 86-87; Prummer, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 452-453; Ter Haar, *de Occasionariis et Recidivis*, a work very much to be commended, can be compared.

a) from the mere occasion of sin: for this is external to the sinner, while the habit is intrinsic; yet the habit is often connected with occasion, insofar as not rarely it arises from this or is greatly increased by it;

b) from a habitual affection for sin, by which one clings to sin with a continual deliberate will: for this is a sin and must absolutely be laid aside in confession, while a habit does not necessarily render one indisposed, since it can remain even involuntarily after it has been retracted.

A habit is acquired by repeated acts. Hence three things are required for contracting it:

1. Frequency or number of falls; but how many acts are required and suffice cannot be determined absolutely, but depends on various circumstances: namely on the disposition of the one sinning, on his greater or lesser fragility or predisposition; on the nature of the sin, more or less alluring, since in certain matters, such as drunkenness or lust, depraved habits are acquired more easily and quickly; on the difficulty or facility of committing the sin; on the manner in which it is committed, with greater or lesser deliberation or adhesion of the will, etc.

2. Duration of time: for he who sins more often on the same day and afterward abstains for a long time does not so easily contract a habit as he who regularly once or again daily, or every week, commits the same sin.

3. Uninterrupted continuation: for just as a habit is lost by cessation from acts, so, if the acts are too distant, it cannot be contracted. Hence:

a) The more easily some sin is committed, the more acts are required for contracting a habit: thus more acts are required for merely internal sins, which are more easily completed, than for external sins; more for sins of the mouth than for sins of deed; more for external sins begun than for consummated ones; and for those which are perpetrated alone than for those which require an accomplice. Thus, according to St. Alphonsus, *Pr. Conf.*, n. 70, to commit an external sin of deed five times in a month can suffice for contracting a habit, provided that some interval intervenes among the various acts, as if someone falls into drunkenness or seminal emission each week for some months; while if it is a question of a sin of the heart or mouth, a much greater number is required, namely twice or three times in a week; but if of external sins which can be perpetrated only with an accomplice, a smaller number is required, so that one who for a year fornicates once a month, or commits sodomy, can be called habituated.

b) One custom is contracted from mere fragility, and another is contracted deliberately from a perfect choice of the will. For there are incontinent customary sinners, who sin only from fragility, or from the impulse of a passing passion that is, as it were, extrinsic to the will, so that habitually their will is opposed to sin, and after the sin has passed they abhor it and easily repent and desire to be freed from the habit, as sometimes happens in those who consent to passions of the flesh, intemperance, or anger, and easily happens in blasphemies, imprecations, and seminal emission. On the contrary, there are intemperate customary sinners, or those habituated in the will of sinning, who sin from a true habit and therefore from malice of the will, or from a permanent evil inclination, as it were intrinsic, and habitual affection for sin, even without the impulse of passion; hence they do not easily detest sin or are moved to penance.[2] This easily happens in shameful love, constant hatred, conjugal onanism, the injustice of theft, and transgression of the precepts of the Church from sloth or human fear, or even in sins of the flesh, for those who rejoice in them or seek them from inveterate custom.

[2] "It is difficult to act against that to which habit inclines." St. Thomas, *de Malo*, q. 3, a. 13, ad 6. "Free choice can use habit or not use it. Whence it is not necessary that someone always act according to habit, but he can sometimes act against habit, although with difficulty. Nevertheless, while the habit remains, it cannot happen that he remain for a long time doing nothing according to the habit." *De Ver.*, q. 24, a. 12, ad 13. Hence "the intemperate man is not penitent," because "his healing is more difficult... on the part of the inclination of appetite which in the intemperate man is from habit, which is removed with difficulty" (II-II, q. 156, a. 3 and ad 2). "Whence those who sin thus persevere in the will of sinning and do not easily repent." *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 13. For indeed "he who sins from habit always rejoices in this, that he works from habit, as long as he uses the habit. But because he can not use the habit, but meditate by reason, which is not totally corrupted, on something else, it can happen that, not using the habit, he grieves concerning what he has committed through habit. And thus for the most part such persons repent of sin, not because sin according to itself displeases them, but because of some inconvenience which they incur from sin" (I-II, q. 78, a. 2, ad 3). Cf. Q. *De Ver.*, 24, a. 10 and a. 11, ad 4; *de Malo*, q. 3, a. 10.

Whence St. Thomas says: whoever sins from habit sins from certain malice (I-II, q. 78, a. 2), and more gravely than from passion: sin from passion is likened to an intermittent disease, sin from habit to a continuous disease (a. 4, and II-II, q. 156, a. 3).

II. Those habituated in sin can for the most part be judged, with Ter Haar, o. c., n. 216:

1. In the matter of lust: those who everywhere yield to morose delights and depraved desires; those who daily, almost, indulge in gravely shameful conversations; those who frequently fall into the sin of seminal emission, say once and again in a week according to each one's constitution; those who ruinously love a person of the other or even of the same sex, often

visit that person and gravely sin with that person; those who are accustomed to frequent brothels, likewise theatres or cinematographs that are very shameful; those who are greatly addicted to reading obscene or erotic books in which they find impure nourishment; those who are accustomed to live onanistically in marriage, etc.

2. In the matter of injustice: those who think almost solely about increasing riches by whatever means, licit or illicit, provided that they do not fall into the hands of the civil judge, e.g., in contracts, in business affairs, in stock-exchange operations, etc.; those who culpably neglect for a long time to restore things unjustly acquired or to pay debts; those who often commit smaller thefts coalescing into grave matter; those who, in the function of an office accepted under the title of justice, e.g., physicians, advocates, notaries, stewards, are frequently gravely injurious, etc.

3. In the matter of enmity: those who for a long time pursue their neighbor with constant grave hatred, seek vengeance concerning an injury inflicted by him, and strive to harm his reputation or temporal goods, etc.

4. In matter opposed to faith: those who often voluntarily cling to doubts concerning the truths of faith; those who are accustomed to read books, periodicals, newspapers gravely dangerous without a just and proportionate cause; those who frequent assemblies of heretics, socialists, and other men of this kind, or have familiar intercourse of friendship with them, and often speak against the Church and its ministers with danger of perversion, etc.

5. In the matter of blasphemy: those who are accustomed in simple conversation to intermingle formulas that are truly blasphemous, or even frequently, if they are carried away by anger, belch forth blasphemies, and use no care to leave behind this custom.

6. In the matter of intemperance: those who are accustomed to visit taverns and there, or even at home, often, say several times in a month, give themselves to drunkenness.

7. In the matter of the precepts of the Church: those who scarcely care for the law of abstinence; those who again and again, e.g., once and again in a month, from a light or no cause do not hear the prescribed Mass; those who on prohibited days are accustomed without grave reason to perform servile works.

8. In the matter of duties of state: those who gravely neglect these, e.g., parents who omit the religious education of children or do not strive to turn them away from dangers of faith and morals, especially mothers of families who permit daughters to make love alone with young men; masters and teachers who are in no way solicitous concerning the honesty of domestics or workers in workshops or pupils in schools; children and subjects who are accustomed to contemn the precepts of parents and masters in a grave matter; ecclesiastical and civil superiors who care little for the particular laws of their community or society, and neither admonish nor punish transgressors, with grave common harm; confessors who neglect to acquire by study the necessary knowledge, so that they are often gravely mistaken in the solution of cases, who question almost nothing, neglect to admonish those not sufficiently disposed, absolve all sinners without distinction, or contrariwise, everywhere deny absolution

to recidivists without grave reason or too harshly; priests who, not dispensed, often do not recite the divine office, who by their light manner of acting, words, games, excessive haste of Mass, furnish grave scandal to the faithful; religious of either sex who often wound vows in grave matter, e.g., of poverty, who are accustomed to transgress rules of greater moment, say of silence, enclosure, spiritual exercises, reverence toward superiors, etc., with notable harm to the community and danger of relaxation, etc.

All these, if not by some motion of passion which quickly passes, so that in a short time they recover themselves, but from a will constantly inclined to evil, frequently, easily, and promptly admit these sins, must be called habituated sinners. For although several from these things enumerated commit only sins of omission, nevertheless they truly sin from a depraved habit, say from the vice of sloth or neglect; this vice indeed is in them a permanent quality, by which they are inclined as if naturally, either so that they bring almost no force to bear upon themselves for fulfilling those duties and precepts, or so that they easily, frequently, and with almost no resistance yield to fear or human respect.

III. In general a recidivist is said to be one who falls again into sin; therefore a recidivist penitent is one who, having confessed a sin and been admonished concerning it, falls back into it even once. Whence, strictly speaking and of itself, there can be a customary sinner who is not a recidivist, as one who has never confessed the sin in whose custom he perseveres; and there can be a recidivist who is not a customary sinner, as one who after confession falls back into sin several times. Nevertheless, in present theological usage, a recidivist is commonly said to be one who, after he has confessed some sin, often falls back into the same without amendment, or into the same habit of sin (whether from an internal cause or from an external cause). Hence with such a customary recidivist there must not be confused a recidivist into a sin without habit or custom, or a recidivist into the occasion of sin alone, such as one who does not keep the promise concerning removing the occasion and approaches the occasion again or has not expelled it.

Hence one recidivist is formal, another material. Formally he is a recidivist if the relapse is supposed to proceed from defect of firm will. For this, three conditions are required together: a) frequent relapse after several confessions, after, namely, the penitent has been admonished by the confessor concerning the gravity of the fault and concerning the means necessary for avoiding it; b) relapse into the same sin, but not into others of a different genus; c) defect of every amendment, even begun, so that in almost the same manner, with the same facility, immediately or shortly after confession, without serious effort (whether to repel temptations or to use the means of amendment), he has fallen back. Thus if someone after individual confessions has frequently and deliberately relapsed, beginning from one or another day after confession.

Materially he is a recidivist if the relapse is supposed to proceed from mere infirmity, inconstancy, or fragility of the will. Such is one who 1) had not been seriously admonished by the confessor; or 2) though admonished, did not relapse into the same sins but into others of a different genus; or 3) although admonished and relapsed, exhibits some amendment or diminution of sin, because he did not sin so often, or for a sufficiently notable time seriously tried to resist temptations, or used some one of the means assigned, even if, because of greater vehemence or frequency of temptation, he sinned as often as before.

IV. Practical rules. - Concerning customary sinners and recidivists, three practical rules are commonly enunciated:

A. Simple customary sinners who are not recidivists can regularly be absolved, as often as they are found truly and sincerely prepared to use the means necessary for overcoming the custom.

This is explained: For their disposition it is required and suffices that they retract the custom and do not voluntarily retain the cause and danger of sin. But it is retracted by the will of sinning no more and of extirpating the depraved habit by means. The means are both general or common, such as prayer, meditation, remembrance of the presence of God, reception of the sacraments, etc., and particular, which are directly opposed to the depraved custom, e.g., mortification of the senses against impurity, abstinence from drink against intemperance.

It is proved: A confession rightly made and the declaration of the penitent asserting that he grieves and proposes amendment are sufficient signs of sorrow and disposition, if a presumption to the contrary does not stand in the way.

But the depraved habit alone of itself does not give such a presumption: for it is not a sign of indisposition, but of greater facility and probability toward sin. "Although a depraved habit," says St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, n. 459, "renders the sinner more prone to sin, nevertheless it does not give a presumption of his infirm will."

Therefore the simple customary sinner who is truly and sincerely prepared to use the means is judged sufficiently disposed, and consequently can be absolved.

This is confirmed: a) certainly it is not required that he has already extirpated the custom; b) moreover, by using the prescribed means, he will lessen the force of the custom and little by little extinguish it: for custom is conquered by contrary custom.

Hence: 1) he who for the first time confesses a depraved habit must be absolved, although no amendment has preceded, provided that he seriously promises it: for since he has not violated promises, he is to be supposed sincere, and can and must be believed;

2. he who has already several times confessed a depraved custom, but had not been admonished concerning remedies to be used, can be absolved if, better instructed, he promises to use them. For the fact that he has not used means is to be attributed to ignorance rather than malice;

3. he who, admonished, did not use the necessary means sufficiently and relapsed, is a recidivist and is to be treated as such.

B. Material or incontinent recidivists, who relapse from fragility and infirmity of the will, can regularly be absolved if they seriously propose amendment and furnish the ordinary signs of the sincerity of their disposition.

For they have relapsed either because they were insufficiently admonished, or after a serious effort at amendment because of greater vehemence or frequency of temptation, or inconstancy of the will in persevering, or from mere fragility in such a way that sin habitually displeases them. Accordingly, after the fall they immediately detest the sin, but from infirmity of the will or from mobility and

vehemence of passion they again succumb. Now ordinarily there is no doubt concerning the disposition of these.

C. Formal and intemperate recidivists regularly cannot be absolved unless by special signs they show that they have true contrition and firm purpose.

Such recidivists are from an evil will, who cling to the object of sin and from this affection are driven into new sins; whence they are suspect concerning disposition. For one who sincerely and strongly proposes a thing morally possible to him, in the case to avoid sin and to use the necessary means, does not so easily nor so suddenly change his mind and will, but perseveres at least for some time and uses the means. Whence frequent relapse from a depraved will, without almost any effort and any amendment, generates a prudent suspicion and a founded presumption that someone's purpose was not sincere and efficacious but only infirm, and that even now it is such if in the same manner as before he proposes under common signs.

But this presumption is not destroyed by a simple assertion, which no longer deserves anything except little faith, but only by special and extraordinary signs.

Therefore such a penitent remains suspect concerning disposition, and accordingly the confessor cannot form for himself a prudent judgment concerning his legitimate disposition.

And therefore such penitents are to be held as doubtfully disposed, and cannot be absolved unless a) they furnish a special disposition or extraordinary signs of disposition, by which they appear morally certainly disposed, so that they can be absolved absolutely; or b) unless there is a proportionately grave reason, sufficient namely that they can be absolved under condition, which is verified in the cases enumerated in the treatise on Penance, where it treats of the Duties of the Minister.

Hence false is both the opinion of the Laxists and of some moderns saying that they can be held as disposed and absolved with ordinary signs, unless from the circumstances there are also positive indications of indisposition (as appears from proposition 60 condemned by Innocent XI);[3] and the opinion of the Rigorists who said that they are not to be absolved unless by long experience they have proved amendment.

[3] "To a penitent having a custom of sinning against the law of God, nature, or the Church, even if no hope of amendment appears, absolution is neither to be denied nor deferred, provided that by mouth he says that he grieves and proposes amendment." But in the case, no hope of amendment appears.

V. Manner of acting in practice. - From this it is evident how one must proceed in practice:

1. The recidivist must be examined, whether he has notably diminished the number of falls, or abstained for a notable time after confession, or fought strenuously even if he has fallen several times more than before. Such a one can be absolved immediately, because he has used a serious zeal of amendment, of which there is a threefold sign: a) use of means, b) rarer, more difficult, or later relapse, c) perseverance for some time not altogether brief.

2. If serious effort is lacking, special or extraordinary signs are to be sought; when these are posited, the recidivist can be absolved immediately. Extraordinary signs, however, are not necessarily extraordinary dispositions, since simple attrition suffices, but more probative, clearer, more numerous signs of sufficient attrition than those which had been given before by

the same penitent. Hence they are to be considered relatively to the disposition of the penitent, to the nature of the temptations, and to other circumstances.

The principal extraordinary signs are commonly enumerated: a) sighs and tears poured out not from a human motive (e.g., because of harm following from sin, because the girl has been abandoned by her lover, a man has lost honor or reputation), or because of dejection or softness of soul, or from the intention of deceiving the confessor, but from a supernatural motive, namely because of the offense of God and the ruin of one's own soul; these therefore are not always to be trusted, especially among little women, but easily in a strong man; b) cordial words manifesting a compunct heart and firm will of avoiding sins; c) spontaneous confession, not made from mere custom, persuasion of parents or superiors, or the obligation of the paschal precept, but from the internal impulse of grace, especially when notable difficulties had to be overcome, of a longer journey, great conflict, grave harm to be undergone, or gain lost; d) spontaneous flight from the occasion, e.g., by seeking reconciliation with an enemy, restoring what was taken away, dismissing a concubine; e) manifestation of a firm and generous will exhibited by deeds, e.g., by manifesting sins previously concealed, instituting a general confession, approaching the confessor notwithstanding the mockery of friends, etc.; f) detestation of sin immediately after the fall, because then relapse can be attributed to mere fragility; g) firmness of purpose, which reveals itself by amendment protracted for a sufficiently long time, or by a request for means of amendment freely made; h) unusual fear struck from some event, e.g., the death of a blood-relative or friend, public or private calamity, fear of imminent death; i) reception of more abundant grace, e.g., on the occasion of a mission or spiritual exercises, etc., etc.

3. If extraordinary signs also are lacking, the penitent is not immediately to be dismissed, but is to be disposed to contrition by a fatherly and fervent exhortation, more efficacious remedies also having been proposed. This work will be easier with an incontinent recidivist who has relapsed from ignorance or from mere fragility than with an intemperate one who has relapsed from affection for sin. Nevertheless, if after exhortation he furnishes extraordinary signs of a changed will and promises to use more efficacious remedies, he can be absolved.

4. If, after a fervent exhortation, the recidivist remains doubtfully disposed, he can be absolved under condition (if you are capable) if a special and grave necessity presses, namely danger of death, marriage to be contracted here and now, difficulty of returning (unless restitution must be made or the occasion removed), danger of infamy, a very founded danger of alienation from the sacrament or of its abandonment (that is, that the penitent will not return), or imperfect use of reason. Otherwise absolution is to be deferred, because delay is necessary for exploring the firm purpose of the penitent, and the sacrament cannot be exposed to danger of nullity without urgent necessity.

5. Finally, if it is morally certain that the recidivist remains indisposed, he is to be dismissed without absolution. Yet this should be done a) for a brief time, e.g., 8 or 15 days, not longer, lest he come into despair and sin more often; b) with most humane words, not harsher ones, lest the penitent bid farewell to confession; c) by explaining the reason why absolution is deferred, so that thus the penitent may understand that the confessor acts so not from hatred or anger, but from fatherly solicitude, and as if unwillingly, because his office demands it; d) by assigning the means which must be used to obtain a better disposition, so that thus the

penitent may know what must be done in order that he can obtain absolution: for delay of itself does not have power to change the mind, unless at the same time opportune remedies are prescribed to him.

VI. Observations.

1. In the aforesaid cases let the confessor not be too rigid, lest he cast penitents into desperation, nor too kind, lest the negligent remain in filth.

2. The confessor must form for himself a right judgment concerning the recidivist. He will do this by inquiring whether he has already been admonished by a confessor and what remedies were assigned to him; whether he used them; whether he relapsed as often as before; whether a little after confession, or after a struggle and resistance more often offered; when he last sinned. Then let him inspect what the present dispositions of the penitent are. For questioning of this kind, just as in the care of bodily diseases, so in the healing of spiritual diseases, is fundamental. Thus Aertnijs, *Theol. Mor.*, T. II, n. 314, Q. 2.

3. Delay of absolution with an apt admonition of the confessor, especially for younger penitents of a lighter disposition but piously educated, is an excellent means for inculcating greater detestation of sin and for strengthening their weak will. On the contrary, in our times, especially in cities, where faith languishes, delay of absolution is not always of much profit; indeed it rather renders certain sinners offended and indignant, and hardens them more. But if the confessor prudently fears this, let him try to dispose the penitent the more indulgently and absolve at least under condition. Thus Noldin, *Theol. Mor.*, T. III, n. 411. Yet he would interpret these words badly who concluded that one must always act thus and that absolution is never to be deferred.

4. In practice, as regards those who approach only at the paschal time, let the confessor not inquire longer in what degree and for how many years they have existed as recidivists, but, their custom into which they relapse having been known, let him rather with every care dispose them according to the things heard in the present confession, using better means of amendment, especially that they approach the sacraments more frequently, and, unless from this confession itself a special suspicion arises, let him not inquire concerning preceding years. Thus *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen., n. 87. This again holds not always, but generally and in many cases.

5. As regards recidivists in venial sins, those who fall from fragility and those who fall from deliberate will are to be distinguished. The former are to be absolved; yet it will be opportune that they accuse some sin of their past life, or specially detest some genus of venials into which they are accustomed to fall, and that they propose to impose upon themselves some lighter penance in the evening as often as they advert that they have relapsed into these. As regards the latter, greater prudence will be needed, especially if they accuse no sins of their past life: for it will easily happen that those who are accustomed to commit fully deliberate venial sins do not have sufficient contrition or firm purpose concerning these; it belongs to the confessor

to dispose them to these by insistently preaching the great malice of venial sin. (Reuter, o. c., n. 187.)

For this the following motives can be proposed: a) that venial sin is an evil greater than every evil; b) that God punishes it most gravely; c) that the soul with venial sin cannot enter heaven; d) that it disposes to mortal sin; e) that it is an abuse of the help of divine omnipotence and of one's own faculty and of creatures; f) to which can be added the likeness of a son who would not wish so to offend his father that he would deserve to be deprived of the inheritance or cast out of the paternal house, and yet offends him with many light offenses.

VII. Corollaries from Marc, *Theol. Mor.*, T. II, n. 1830:

1. A recidivist returning the first time can more easily be absolved than the second or third time (because lesser signs are required).

2. The incontinent (from passion) can more easily be absolved than the intemperate (from habit), because in the former sufficient signs, indeed extraordinary ones, are chiefly found; in the latter, few.

3. A formal recidivist, unless certainly indisposed, can be absolved under condition only in those cases (six) in which the doubtfully disposed can be absolved.

VIII. Cases. - 1) The first and almost classic case is concerning absolution to be denied to a cleric, or concerning a cleric habituated in shameful sin, to be promoted to sacred orders.

Besides negative sanctity, or immunity from sin and the state of grace, there is required from one to be ordained positive sanctity, conspicuous in chaste morals, which shines forth in the observance of perfect continence. Thus the Council of Trent wills that only those be ordained whose approved age is a life of probity, who hope, with God as author, that they can be continent (sess. 23, c. 12 and 13); indeed, those to be ordained priests are to be so conspicuous by piety and chaste morals that an excellent example of good works and admonitions of life can be expected from them (c. 14). Innocent III had preceded (decr. *a multis*, 9): "Let no one be permitted to approach sacred Order unless he exists either a virgin or of proved chastity." Now concerning a cleric habituated in shameful sin, and not yet having extirpated the habit, it cannot be said that his life is proved, or that his age is proved, or that hope shines forth that he will be chaste and continent. Hence for a cleric of this sort, not yet amended, approach to sacred orders cannot prudently be permitted, but delay must absolutely be imposed.

Hence it is clear a) that one habituated in shameful sin, who can be absolved with undoubted signs of sincere sorrow and purpose, can no longer be absolved if he wishes rashly to ascend to sacred orders: for since he does not yet exist of proved continence, he is obliged first to furnish a serious trial of continence, and if he does not wish this, he does not have the purpose of fulfilling all grave precepts and avoiding all mortal sins;

b) nor does extraordinary grace of compunction and signs of more fervent penance ordinarily suffice for supplying for such a trial: such extraordinary conversions are rare and scarcely can be known with

certitude from external signs; whence the confessor can only with difficulty admit such an exception, and in doubt he must stand by the general rule and require a serious proof of chastity;

c) confessors act imprudently who, against the judgment of the ordinary confessor, grant absolution and ascent to Orders to such a cleric exceptionally approaching them (e.g., on the occasion of spiritual exercises), even if poured out in tears: extraordinary signs can suffice for proving present dispositions, but they are suspect in relation to future proof of chastity;

d) nor can it be done otherwise because of infamy to be avoided, or something worse to be feared. Infamy is not really present, since the true cause can always be hidden by at least some pretext, such as more mature thought; and besides, according to the order of charity, the goods of the soul and of eternal salvation are to be loved more than the goods of reputation and honor. Nor can something worse be feared, since nothing worse is to be feared in the Church than the scandal of an unworthy priest.

Therefore, although certitude that the aforesaid penitent will not relapse cannot be demanded, since we all can sin, it must nevertheless be likely and there must be founded hope that he is not going to relapse, in other words, that by his morals he has sufficiently proved that he can preserve continence in perpetuity.

Concerning this case St. Alphonsus can usefully be seen (in his celebrated dissertation inserted in *Theol. Mor.*, l. VI, n. 63) and his disciples, and recently *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, t. VIII, Sept. 1912, p. 125.

2. The other case, concerning the drunkard, is thus solved by Noldin, *Theol. Mor.*, III, n. 411:

"Recidivists in drunkenness and as such publicly known, who almost every week or still more often make themselves drunk, are not altogether to be repelled from the sacraments, but ordinarily neither are they immediately to be admitted to them. Not the first, because one must despair of the amendment of no man; not the second, first because he cannot be absolved who is foreseen to be going to violate his purpose after a short time, unless necessity urges: for scandal would have to be feared if immediately after receiving the sacraments he should relapse; then because public scandal must be repaired beforehand. Therefore absolution is to be deferred for a penitent of this kind, until he has at least in some measure amended himself. Indeed even in the case in which, because of an extraordinary sign of penance, he had been immediately absolved, it is better not to admit him immediately to holy communion, both so that public scandal may meanwhile be repaired by real amendment, and so that scandal which might perhaps arise from relapse may be forestalled."

Question V: Concerning Those in Occasions of Sin

I. An occasion of sin is an external circumstance of a thing or person furnishing facility for sinning and thus inviting to sin, which constitutes one in danger of sinning.[1] Hence it is distinguished a) from internal principles which incline to sin, such as bodily constitution, passions, concupiscence, and evil habits; b) from the danger of sinning, which can be both internal and external and extends more broadly: namely, it is an impulse to sinning which, if it proceeds from a person or an external thing, is called an occasion; if it is from within, it is called simple danger; so that every occasion is a danger, but not every danger is an occasion. Therefore this is constituted at once from two things: 1)

on the part of the external object, from the impulse and opportunity alluring to sin; 2) on the part of the subject, from the propensity or internal inclination to sinning.

[1] Concerning those in occasions of sin, St. Alphonsus, *Theol. Mor.*, l. VI, nn. 452-458; and *Praxis conf.*, nn. 63-69; Billuart, de Poen., diss. 6, a. 10, § 5; Reuter, o. c., nn. 168-174; Berardi, *opusc. de Recidivis et Occasionariis*; Marc, o. c., nn. 1819-1831; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 299-309; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), nn. 81-84; Ballerini, de Poen., nn. 167-203; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 617-628; Tanquerey, o. c., nn. 524-536; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 401-409; Genicot, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 369-374; Prummer, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 449-451; Ter Haar, *de Occasionariis et Recidivis*, can be compared.

II. The occasion is divided:

A. By reason of influence, it is remote or proximate, according as it has only some power of alluring to sin, or also a great power; or according as it constitutes a light danger of sinning, or a grave one, so that one who exposes himself, if not more often, at least frequently or several times, is going to sin. The gravity of the danger can be discerned by the confessor in a threefold way:

1. from the experience of the penitent, or frequency of relapse, if someone previously placed in the same circumstances has usually or at least frequently sinned, e.g., if he has sinned ten times in a month with a maidservant, or even if he rarely visits a person and each time sins with that person;

2. from things commonly occurring, namely when experience is lacking and other special indications from the person of that penitent cannot be had; for then the rule is to be applied: what commonly is an occasion of sin to others in the same circumstances is presumed also to be such for this person until the contrary is proved; e.g., if a young man prone to lust enters a brothel, if a younger girl, light in soul and infirm in will, for a long time lives alone with a master who vividly solicits her;

3. from the circumstances and disposition of the penitent, especially from his known fragility, although he himself has rarely been in the occasion, or has once been in it and has not sinned.

But since the danger can be more or less grave and certain, the rules will have to be applied more strictly or more mildly according to the diverse case.

B. By reason of the person, it is absolute and according to itself, or relative and by accident, according as, human fragility being considered, it constitutes danger for all, or only for a determinate person by reason of his own fragility and particular disposition. Proximate per se is that in which men commonly for the most part sin; proximate by accident is that which, although generally it is not proximate with respect to others, nevertheless is proximate with respect to some person because he has frequently fallen in it, or because his fall is prudently feared.

An absolutely proximate occasion is the reading of a very obscene book, concubinage, lying in bed with a person of the other sex, fixed looking at a very obscene thing, a very shameful theatre or cinematograph, assiduous reading of a very anti-religious newspaper or periodical, a book professedly attacking the faith, enrollment in a Masonic sect. On the contrary, entry into a tavern is relative for a drunkard, trade for the unjust man, conversation with a woman for the lustful man, prolonged conversation with a beautiful girl for an impure young man, dances for a fragile young man, the office of surgeon or confessor by reason of special weakness, etc. Hence not only can an absolutely light occasion be relatively grave, but also an absolutely grave occasion can be relatively light for someone,

if he is little moved by reason of a special circumstance, coldness, habituation, piety, or if he has specially fortified himself with cautions and an efficacious protection.

C. By reason of duration, it is continuous or in being, which is present and always or habitually accompanies a man (continuously present without being sought), e.g., detention of another's goods or of a benefice accepted simoniacally, retention of a depraved book or obscene pictures or of an instrument for sinning, a daily anti-religious newspaper, a concubine or dwelling with a maidservant with whom you are accustomed to sin, assiduous frequenting of a person at your home, an office or business which is often the cause of sinning, etc.; and interrupted or in becoming (not in being), which is absent, and occurs or is sought only at intervals, e.g., entry into a brothel, into a tavern for the drunkard, access to a banquet, depraved association, conversation with a mistress who does not live under the same roof, games for one who is accustomed to blaspheme when playing, frequenting a girl, eating-houses, dances, etc.

D. On the part of the cause, the occasion is either voluntary or necessary, according as it can easily be avoided without grave inconvenience, or cannot be removed either physically or morally. Physically, if in no way it can be left behind, as if someone is in prison or on a ship with an occasion of sinning, or is at the point of death and does not have time to cast it out. Morally, if the occasion cannot be left behind without sin, or grave scandal, or grave danger of falling into an equal or worse evil (as if an irascible servant quarrels with peaceful companions such as he would scarcely find in another service), or great detriment of the goods of life, reputation, or fortune (even for a rich person), such as the loss of office (e.g., of physician, advocate), function, state, or fortune. Thus, for example, a husband with respect to his wife; a son or daughter of the family who has the occasion at home; parents to whom offspring furnish an occasion of anger; a pupil who cannot leave school or college; the office of physician, merchant, soldier; conversation with a girl for entering marriage, etc.

III. The principal occasions of sin can be enumerated as the following, with Tanquerey, de Poen., n. 527:

a) Against faith: the reading of non-Catholic newspapers, periodicals, or books; more intimate and frequent association with non-Catholics; frequenting schools and colleges in which no religion, or a false religion, is taught; service under heretical or irreligious masters; attendance at non-Catholic sermons; mixed marriages, etc.

b) Against chastity: concubinage; cohabitation of persons of different sex who are not joined in legitimate marriage; conversations with depraved companions; certain dances which, because of the persons, the kind of dancing, and the circumstances of place and time, are more dangerous; frequenting theatres, especially those which, both by the things exhibited and by stage dances (ballets), inflame lust; reading obscene or erotic books; retention of statues, images, and photographs which today easily corrupt morals among young people; certain less honorable games among persons of different sex; more frequent and protracted visits of lovers, especially when one alone with one alone remains for long hours, as more often happens in certain regions, with great detriment of souls; domestic dangers, which arise either from members of the family, or from servants or masters; certain arts which are dangerous because of depraved conversations or more intimate relations between persons of different sex (*poseuse*, *actrice*), etc.

c) Against temperance: taverns and eating-houses; frequenting those who indulge drunkenness, especially on Saturday or other days on which workers are accustomed to receive wages; certain festivities, whether religious or civil; sometimes wedding banquets, and in certain regions vigils by the bodies of the dead; drinking in equal draughts, etc.

d) Against justice: certain public and political offices, which easily furnish a means of becoming unjustly rich; certain trades and stock-exchange speculations, which are not immune from fraud, etc.

IV. Principle: By its nature there is a grave obligation for each one, as far as lies in him, of removing the proximate occasion of sin.

It is proved: He who knowingly and willingly, without sufficient reason, remains in a proximate occasion freely wills the occasion in which he will likely sin, and by that very fact implicitly wills sin (and thus sins and is unworthy of absolution); for he does not have an efficacious will or purpose of not sinning any more, but because he does not avoid grave danger, when he can, he is convicted of loving the sin whose danger he loves. Or, on the contrary: he who must absolutely will the end must also will the means morally necessary for it, not indeed doubtful but certain or more certain means. Therefore man, who must absolutely will to avoid sin, is also bound to avoid its grave danger, or to remove the proximate occasion, which is a means morally necessary and more certain for this.

Hence a) Scripture admonishes, Ecclus. III, 27: "He who loves danger will perish in it," that is, he who knowingly and without necessity exposes himself to the danger of sinning cannot hope that he is not going to sin. And Mt. V, 29: "If your right eye scandalizes you, pluck it out and cast it from you... and if your right hand scandalizes you, cut it off and cast it from you: for it is expedient for you that one of your members perish, rather than that your whole body go into Gehenna."

b) The Church condemned the opposite doctrine, which was reprobated by Innocent XI, prop. 61, 62, and 63, and by Alexander VII, prop. 41.

Hence one who is in a proximate occasion of sinning is bound under grave obligation to remove either physically the external object alluring to mortal sin, or, if this cannot be done, at least morally, namely by opportune remedies by which the proclivity to evil is healed. Otherwise he is incapable of absolution, because he does not wish to fulfill a grave obligation and lacks the purpose of not sinning hereafter. And he commits a sin of the same species as that to which he knows he exposes himself, and so much graver as that sin is graver and its danger more proximate.

V. Opinion not to be approved. - A few authors have said that the proximate occasion to be deserted is only that which constitutes a more probable or morally certain danger of sinning, or in which men more frequently or almost certainly sin. This is evidently demonstrated, they say, by the argument brought above. But it does not appear, they say, why at least he sins gravely who has even a solid reason for estimating that in this occasion which he approaches he is not going to sin gravely: for he does not choose a thing which by moral necessity carries sin with it. Thus, for example, Genicot[2] (*Th. M.*, II, n. 372), after Ballerini (de Pecc., n. 343 sq.) and Noldin (*Th. M.*, III, n. 413).

[2] These seem to confuse the definition, and to apply what is commonly handed down concerning an absolutely proximate occasion to a relatively proximate occasion. In the newest edition of Genicot's work, this has already been changed by the editor.

Falsely, however. For 1) when it is a question not only of the liceity and illicitness of acting, but of an end absolutely to be obtained, we cannot choose a merely probable part, indeed not even a more

probable but less safe one, but that which is safer must be done. Now to avoid formal sin is an end to be attained absolutely. Therefore we cannot expose ourselves to grave danger, even merely probable, of sinning mortally, but we must do what is safer and leave behind an occasion which includes probable danger. The danger of formal sin must absolutely be fled before all things.

2. He who exposes himself to the probable danger of sinning, even if perhaps only in individual acts, nevertheless sometime likely, indeed certainly, will fall, which must by absolute necessity be avoided; and therefore as often as he exposes himself to that probable danger, so often he fails against the end to be obtained, because each time he rashly exposes himself to grave danger of sinning. But this is a sin grave from its genus; whence he sins mortally.

3. He who without reason exposes himself to a merely probable danger of bodily death sins gravely; so also he who exposes himself to a merely probable danger of the death of the soul, or mortal sin. Nor can he expect the special help of grace which he would need for overcoming the danger to which he rashly exposes himself.

Hence for a proximate occasion there is not required an absolute frequency of falls, or a number notable in itself, but a relative frequency suffices for the number of times in which someone has been exposed to the occasion, e.g., if in 12 visits someone is accustomed to sin six or five times; likewise if someone visiting a girl daily sins ten times in a month; or if they meet each Sunday and fall twelve times in a year or somewhat more; likewise if for two years someone visited a woman only three or four times in a year and almost always sinned with her; indeed if for three years he visited only once in a year and sinned each time.

VI. Practical rules. - From the foregoing three practical rules can be established:

A. One who remains in a voluntary and continuous proximate occasion regularly cannot be absolved unless he first proposes to remove the occasion and also removes it.

For since removal of the occasion ordinarily is arduous, there is proximate danger of breaking the purpose, and therefore if the occasion is not taken away before absolution, the penitent will easily deceive himself (falsely persuading himself that he is going to resist temptations), so that the purpose is rendered inefficacious and he does not remove the occasion. Hence the penitent who, adverting to this, exposed himself to this danger would be at least suspect concerning disposition, concerning which therefore moral certitude often could not be had: for why does this man make confession if he does not remove the occasion? And then the confessor who exposed him to such danger would sin against his office of physician.

Exception is made if, public scandal being lacking, 1) the penitent from ignorance or lightness of soul is not conscious that he remains in a proximate occasion or that the obligation of removing it is grave, and the confessor foresees that admonition will be useless or harmful: then provisionally he is to be left in good faith, and little by little instructed concerning the occasion to be fled, which he will better understand if by experience of his own fragility he has known that he frequently sins because of it;

2. or the occasion can easily be left behind, e.g., a depraved book, a thing of another detained while restitution is spontaneously promised;

3. or the penitent manifests extraordinary signs of sorrow and purpose, e.g., he has already sent notice to the maidservant concerning leaving the house, or has hired a new maidservant;

4. or a grave cause urges, so that previous removal of the occasion harms more, e.g., imminent danger of death, great difficulty of returning for a long time and of approaching another confessor, as easily happens if the penitent comes from a remote place, danger of infamy or scandal as easily happens if the sacrament must be received, danger of spiritual harm, e.g., alienation from the sacrament.

In these latter cases the penitent is to be admonished that he will not obtain absolution any more unless he has stood by his promises; but if he has been admonished uselessly, he is to be held as a recidivist.

B. One who remains in a voluntary and interrupted proximate occasion, e.g., by frequenting games, eating-houses, depraved societies, can be absolved several times, provided that he firmly proposes to beware of it; but if he has promised several times, and no amendment appears, he is to be held and treated as a recidivist, and generally, unless perhaps he furnishes extraordinary signs of disposition, absolution is to be deferred until he has actually left behind the occasion.

For he is judged disposed, and therefore is to be absolved, unless signs of the contrary are present, as easily happens if he has promised several times and is now habituated, or unless it is better to send him back, with his consent, so that he may remove the occasion more promptly and firmly.

C. One who remains in a necessary proximate occasion regularly can be absolved, provided that he is truly disposed to render the occasion remote by opportune and efficacious remedies.

For on the one hand the occasion is not a sin nor does it induce necessity of sinning, but can be overcome, although with difficulty, especially with the grace of God; on the other hand no one is bound to the impossible, and therefore one who is in a necessary occasion rather unwillingly undergoes the danger than loves and seeks it and exposes himself to the occasion. Hence, if he uses opportune means and humbly asks the grace of victory, he can hope for it from God, "who will not permit you to be tempted above that which you can bear" (1 Cor. X, 13).

Hence: 1) He can be absolved provided that a) the occasion is not evil in itself; b) a just cause is present, such as physical impotence, or a sin otherwise to be committed, or danger of an equal or greater sin, or the spiritual good of himself or of the neighbor, or great loss of temporal goods (life, reputation, fortune); c) there is hope of a good outcome, namely of overcoming the temptation; and d) the penitent is prepared to use sufficient means.

2. On the contrary, he who after several admonitions always relapses in the same way, even means having been used, so that there is no amendment nor probable hope of amendment, is to be treated as a recidivist and cannot be absolved; unless perhaps he furnishes extraordinary signs, or is prepared to use new special means, or, if the occasion can physically be removed, first leaves it behind, according to Mt. V, 29 and XVI, 26 and XVIII, 9: for otherwise he is morally certainly going to sin. For as often as someone in some occasion is morally certainly going to sin, he is bound to flee it even with danger of life.

And although Ballerini denies the supposition, saying that amendment necessarily follows from the means used, and that from the absence of amendment it can only be concluded that the means were insufficient or neglected, nevertheless this, although it rarely happens, is not impossible; indeed sometimes there are those who do not seriously use the means unless absolution is deferred until they furnish greater extraordinary signs or leave behind the occasion. Such a one, namely, either must return amended or remove the occasion before he is absolved.

VII. Means to be used against proximate occasions. - The principal means by which a necessary occasion can from proximate become morally remote[3] are of three kinds:

[3] Cf. Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, n. 308; Tanquerey, o. c., n. 535.

1. Some lessen the force of the occasion, such as words said seriously and firmly to the accomplice to express horror for the sin committed; opening the mouth to shout; relation of the matter made to someone who can apply a remedy (e.g., to a superior, parents, master), or threat of this relation; avoidance of all familiarity or solitary conversation with the accomplice; indeed, to flee that person's sight, to speak and think nothing of that person insofar as can be done. If some circumstances generate the occasion, e.g., evening conversation with a maidservant, conversation in secret with a person cohabiting, they are to be diligently taken away. Likewise if the danger arises from the fact that the accomplice enters the bedroom, let the door be closed and barred; if the danger is from drinking in a tavern, let it be altogether established that nothing is to be drunk there, etc.

2. Others lessen the force of concupiscence, by furnishing it no fuel through idleness, liberty of the senses, depraved thoughts, readings, intemperance, etc.; e.g., assiduous labor, so that thus the evils which idleness teaches may be avoided; modesty of the senses, especially of the eyes; mortification of curiosity and of other passions, by which one accustomed to resist licit inclinations may more easily resist illicit ones; diligent avoidance of depraved thought, especially concerning the loved person; flight from dangerous reading; abstinence from excessive drinking; moderate bodily exercise for restraining concupiscence, etc.

3. Others increase spiritual strength: to pray fervently every morning and evening and when temptation presses; daily before an image of the Crucified to renew the purpose of sinning no more; to have frequent recourse to the Blessed Virgin; often to think of the last things, or before sleep to say to oneself: if I continue to live thus, I shall be devoted to eternal punishments; to read pious books; to recite pious aspirations and to walk in the sight of God; to give alms, receive the sacraments assiduously, and immediately after a fall approach the confessor, etc.

These means are not all to be used at once, but now these, now those, according to the disposition of the person, the nature of the occasion, and other circumstances.

VIII. Applications. - From what has been said Marc deduces the following conclusions (*Th. M.*, II, n. 1825):

1. A woman must prefer to perish in want rather than frequent a house where she is given gifts which have already passed, or probably soon are going to pass, into the wages of prostitution.

2. A penitent must leave a confessor, although useful, if from conversation with him he is accustomed to consent to impure delight.

3. A man, thievish for a long time, must leave an office which impels him to steal.

4. The glutton must avoid banquets; the drunkard taverns; the lustful man familiar and private conversations with women, etc., even if he seems to himself to have a just cause for conversing thus.

5. An adolescent and a girl, frequenting one another with a view to marriage, are not to be absolved unless the occasion from proximate becomes, or can become, remote through means to be prescribed by the confessor.

6. A son of the family sinning with a maidservant who dwells with him in the paternal house is not to be absolved (at least more often) unless he diligently uses the remedies prescribed by the confessor, and thus truly removes the occasion.

Question VI: Concerning Penitents Who Are to Be Obliged or Induced to a New or General Confession

I. One defective confession is incomplete, another invalid: incomplete, that to which material integrity is lacking, when some mortal sin was omitted from a legitimate cause, or at least without grave fault, as can happen from ignorance or from forgetfulness; invalid, that to which one of the essential conditions necessary for its value is lacking, whether the penitent was not conscious of this essential defect, and then the confession is simply invalid, or whether he was conscious of it, and then the confession is also sacrilegious.[1]

[1] Concerning confession to be repeated, as also concerning general confession, the following can be compared: St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. VI, nn. 498-505; Reuter, o. c., nn. 189-191; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1706-1713; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 201-203; *Th. P.*, n. 245 sq.; Gury-Ballerini, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 511-520; Ballerini, de Poen., n. 460 sq.; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), nn. 49-50; Haine, *Th. M.*, III, qq. 57-59; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 451-456; Genicot, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 305-310; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 290-291, 437 sq.; Prummer, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 386-390; Berardi, *Praxis Conf.*, n. 1131; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 12.

But since by the precept of Christ all mortal sins are to be subjected to the keys of the Church, that by the force of absolution they may be directly absolved, hence:

a) a confession certainly incomplete is to be completed, so that the forgotten sin may be directly remitted by a new absolution, and otherwise the subsequent confession will not be integral;

b) a confession morally certainly invalid or sacrilegious of itself is to be repeated, so that the sins may again be subjected to the power of the keys, even if meanwhile they have been otherwise remitted, e.g., by force of perfect contrition.

We say: 1) a confession certainly invalid, because in doubt the repetition of confession is of itself to be counseled, but not strictly imposed: for in doubt one must stand for the value of the act, and a doubtful law does not oblige;

2. morally certainly, because in moral matters absolute certitude is not required, but certitude broadly so called, which renders one morally certain, suffices;

3. of itself it must be repeated: for if the penitent is in good faith (as easily occurs when the confession was simply invalid) and it is foreseen that he will not easily be convinced and will not repeat the confession, although he is greatly to be invited to this, he will not be admonished concerning the invalidity, at least here and now, namely to avoid a greater evil:[2] for thus on the one hand formal sin is avoided, and on the other hand sins not yet validly accused will be indirectly remitted through the absolution which he receives in good faith.

[2] Indeed, an ingenious confessor sometimes will be able to supply by questions and to examine the penitent in such a way that the latter, even unknowingly, performs a general confession; e.g., by asking how long he was accustomed to sin, to commit the sin confessed, how often in a year, whether he confessed these things, whether he committed other graver things, etc.

II. A confession can be invalid both on the part of the confessor and on the part of the penitent:

A. On the part of the confessor: 1) if he lacks the power of order or of jurisdiction; or 2) omits or substantially changes the form of the sacrament; or 3) does not have the intention of absolving; or 4) has heard no sin, or has understood none because of deafness, sleep, drunkenness, distraction, or another reason of this kind, so that there is not matter from which he may absolve. These defects the penitent cannot and is not bound to correct except insofar as they are known to him.

B. On the part of the penitent, not only if he is merely incapable, e.g., if he is not baptized or does not have the intention of receiving the sacrament, but also if he is indisposed either 1) by defect of contrition or purpose, as in one who has approached confession from mere human respect and without any intention of changing life; to this is reduced a defect in the knowledge of truths to be known by necessity of means, which defect renders supernatural contrition impossible; or 2) by defect of examination, if in investigating mortal sins there was negligence gravely culpable on his part; or 3) by defect of sincerity, if knowingly and willingly he has concealed some grave sin, or has lied in a grave matter of confession, or, being excommunicated, approaches confession in bad faith. This defect easily arises from the shame of the penitent and from the haste or rigor of the confessor, or also from the custom of excusing penitents.

III. How confession is to be repeated. - In the manner of repeating confession a distinction must be made.

A. Either it is repeated before another confessor who knows nothing; therefore all sins are to be declared distinctly in particular and the whole confession is to be repeated from the beginning.

a) If it was sacrilegious, there come to be accused 1) the sacrilege voluntarily committed in the prior confession, 2) the mortal sins declared in that confession, and 3) all sins invalidly declared, and also the various sacrileges committed in subsequent confessions which meanwhile were instituted with memory of the preceding sacrilege, so that from this they were invalid and sacrilegious. On the contrary, if the penitent, forgetful of the sacrilege, meanwhile made confessions, these are valid. "He is bound," says Billuart, De Poenit., diss. 7, a. 2, § 5, "to repeat that first confession with accusation of his sacrilege, and also the following ones, if he made any with memory of this sin not confessed, because they were not valid from defect of integrity; other ones which he made in good faith without memory of this sin he is not bound to repeat, because they were formally integral, and as is supposed he used the other necessary things."

b) But if the confession was only invalid, not sacrilegious, that confession alone must be repeated when such a defect is recognized; but not the subsequent ones, because they were valid.

B. Or it is instituted before the same confessor, who has already heard and judged individual sins:

a) If he remembers them at least confusedly, or also the state of the penitent, and

1. the confession was sacrilegious, it suffices to accuse oneself distinctly in particular concerning the sacrilege and concerning the sins omitted (if there were any), and in a general way concerning all the other sins previously declared in such or such a confession;

2. but if the confession was simply invalid, it suffices to accuse oneself in a general way, as was said. For on the one hand the sins were subjected to the keys and the confessions were sacramental; on the other hand the confessor remembers the sins confusedly, which suffices for making judgment.

b) If the confessor does not remember the state of the penitent, a wholly distinct confession is not required, but such a one suffices by which the confessor in confession remembers the state of the penitent, or resumes a confused knowledge concerning his conscience, or can acquire that knowledge by questions. For this knowledge, as also for judgment concerning the state of the penitent, knowledge of the penance enjoined can contribute and sometimes suffice, though not always.

IV. Corollaries.

1. If someone in good faith confesses to a deaf, somewhat deaf, distracted, or sleeping confessor, the confession is valid provided that the confessor has understood at least some sins; in that case only those things are to be repeated which it is evident were not heard; and, if it is unknown which precisely those are, the whole confession will have to be repeated, at least if it is shorter, because concerning individual sins there cannot be probability, but it must prudently be doubted that they were understood. On the contrary, probably, if it is more lengthy and at the same time it can be thought that most sins were heard, because then concerning individual sins it is truly probable that they were accused, and besides the law of integrity is not judged to oblige with so much inconvenience of repeating all things one by one; whence it suffices to confess them in common, by accusing the certitude or doubt concerning certain sins not heard. But if someone confesses deliberately to such a priest, as also to an unlearned one, precisely so that he would not be able to hear or understand the sins, the confession, because of defect of sincerity, of itself is sacrilegious and to be repeated, unless however he acted through ignorance, not knowing that such a confession is evil.

2. Rustics, children, and the unlearned, who in good faith confessed sins confusedly, not sufficiently explaining the species or number, have been validly absolved (because material integrity is not of the essence of the sacrament); indeed afterward they are not bound to repeat the confession if at the moment of sin they did not have a more distinct knowledge of the species and number. On the contrary, if the insufficiency and confusion in declaration is to be attributed not to ignorance but to actual inadvertence, they must explain the species or number such as they knew at the moment at which they sinned, unless sometimes the confessor receiving the last confession of a penitent who led a uniform life and reveals and

accuses the defects of preceding confessions can sufficiently understand the other sins of past life.

3. A penitent who frequently has relapsed into the same mortal sins without any amendment and without any resistance to the first temptations that occur must be presumed to have made previous confessions without sufficient sorrow and purpose; hence repetition of these is at least greatly to be urged, but not strictly imposed unless they are morally certainly invalid. On the contrary if he persevered for some time, or before relapse truly resisted the first temptations.

V. General confession is the repetition of all or of several confessions; therefore it includes the whole life or a notable part (e.g., one or several years), and can be necessary, useful, or harmful.

a) It is necessary and regularly to be imposed if it is morally certain that several of the previous confessions were invalid or sacrilegious.

b) It is useful and generally to be counseled, because of notable spiritual fruit,

1. for more adult persons who have never made a general confession;

2. for those whose prior confessions are judged doubtfully valid, namely for peace and tranquility of conscience;

3. for those who seriously intend to be converted to God and to institute a better manner of life, or who need more accurate instruction for this;

4. for those who are ending or beginning a part of life of graver moment, or who receive a state of life or new manner of living, such as older children who prepare themselves for first solemn communion, those about to marry, widows, soldiers who enter barracks or leave them, students who undertake higher studies, etc.;

5. for those whom a desire of a more perfect life holds, e.g., those who enter the clerical or religious state;

6. for those who exist in danger of life or are compelled to commit themselves to such danger;

7. finally, on certain extraordinary occasions which furnish opportunity for expiating conscience, such as missions, a jubilee, a spiritual retreat, etc.; in these cases it generally suffices to urge a general confession from the last general confession made.

c) It can be harmful and regularly to be prohibited:

1. to the scrupulous and excessively fearful who have already once performed a confession of this sort, because in these persons new anxieties and scruples always arise from the fact that they fear they have not set forth some sins or have not duly set them forth;

2. to those who, furnished with a vivid imagination and greatly inclined to carnal pleasures, have sinned much and gravely against chastity: distinct and minute recollection of offenses with

minute circumstances would cause new temptations and induce danger of sinning; wherefore such persons are never to be permitted to repeat anything except in a wholly general way;

3. to indisposed recidivists who wish thus to extort absolution.

VI. The manner of receiving a general confession is described among various authors; their principal warnings and counsels we here add.

A. Before confession. "When someone asks to institute a general confession," says Aertnijs, *Th. Past.*, n. 253, "let the confessor immediately explore whether such a confession is necessary, useful, or truly harmful. To this end it is generally not expedient, at least outside the days of a mission, abruptly to ask the penitent whether he has concealed some sin, or something similar; for it will easily happen that a guilty but disturbed penitent will deny it, and afterward will not dare to retract. Wherefore it will be useful to ask from the penitent what reason impels him to make the confession, whether anything troubles him (or: whether he has already confessed generally at other times, from what time, and how often), etc. By these and similar questions let him strive sweetly and shrewdly to fish out whether perhaps sacrileges lie hidden. When the confessor asks, the penitent will often give one of the following answers:

1. Because I have concealed my sins; then let the confessor immediately give courage to him (saying, for example, that it is not a difficult work, since he himself will gladly help), promise that he will be kind toward him, and exhort him to full sincerity (and immediately explore when the last valid confession was made, how often per year he was accustomed to confess and communicate, whether in this time he received another sacrament, namely Confirmation, Extreme Unction).

2. I have never performed a general confession; then let him carefully examine whether it seems necessary or only useful.

3. I made one, but not well; then let him ask why he did not do it well. If the penitent cannot allege any determined motive besides anxiety, he introduces suspicion of scrupulosity.

4. From sermons I understood that my confessions were bad; then let him proceed as above. It should be noted, however, that in the time of a mission penitents sometimes exaggerate the matter.

5. I intend to live better; then it will certainly be very useful..."

In the aforesaid cases sometimes what Reuter has, *Neo-Confessarius*, n. 189, p. 308, can be done: "If the confessor detects that one who has confessed sacrilegiously for many years is not prepared for a general confession, let him order him to confess the things which occur to memory, let him examine him concerning the more obvious matters, so that thus, the ulcer having been opened and shame diminished, he may return more easily. Then let him admonish him to examine himself more concerning the remaining things, for he cannot remember all things so suddenly. Finally let him tell him to return at a designated time for completing the confession, adding that now he is not absolved for his greater future quiet; and thus let him dismiss him well disposed, having imparted a blessing.

But if he could not return, nor were he thought likely to confess easily to another, he would have to be helped by examining him through the precepts of the Decalogue, of the Church, and the capital sins, and he must be admonished that, if perhaps afterward sins committed from the time of the first sacrilegious confession come to mind, these must be confessed. Finally, let it be enjoined upon him for penance that at the next occasion, after a diligent previous examination, he confess, if anything occurs which was omitted and must be confessed."

B. In confession, the confessor 1) from the beginning should exhort the penitent with most humane words to perfect sincerity, and suggest that first he accuse those things which have been committed from the last confession (so that thus the state of the penitent may be better discerned and it may appear whether anything stands in the way of absolution); likewise, generally, those things by which he is more troubled, or whose accusation seems more burdensome to him, e.g., sins against chastity, religion, or justice. When these have been set forth, the conscience of the penitent is unloaded and the remaining confession is rendered easier.

2. Let him help the penitent by questioning discreetly and kindly, especially if the latter is rude and ignorant.[3] Nevertheless, a) ordinarily let him permit the penitent to set forth those things which he remembers spontaneously; indeed if he sees that the penitent has prepared his accusation in order, generally let him not interrupt him with many questions, lest perhaps afterward he be disturbed, thinking that he omitted something. Likewise b) let him abstain from excessive brevity or haste, but grant the penitent sufficient time for explaining the things which seem necessary to him; otherwise the latter perhaps will not be tranquil but will depart disquieted, because he could not say all those things which troubled his mind. A fortiori c) let him not harshly censure him when a graver sin is accused, lest perhaps, terrified by this severity, the penitent conceal something; but on the contrary with fatherly affection let him animate him to open all things candidly, since God remits even the gravest offenses to the sincerely penitent.

[3] For example: Be quiet and of good courage; I will perform your confession; surely I know all the sins which you could have committed; I will uncover all things for you; yours will be only to respond clearly and sincerely to the questions, and to conceive true sorrow concerning the sins.

3. If the general confession is necessary, with great diligence let him question accurately concerning the species and number of sins. But if, by questioning concerning sins, the confessor himself proposes a number, e.g., "Did you do this ten times, a hundred times?" it is generally expedient to propose a larger number rather than a smaller one, since it is easier for the penitent to diminish than to increase. Indeed, if immediately, when such a number has been proposed, the penitent seems to assent, it will be opportune to add: "Did you not do this more often?"

C. After confession 1) let the general question not be omitted: Does anything else trouble your conscience? If so, say it, and I will question you again. 2) If nothing seems to remain, the penitent is to be admonished not to be disturbed if afterward he remembers a grave sin which he did not declare: for it suffices to confess it in the next confession, if it has not yet been validly accused; but if it had previously been validly declared, it is not necessary to repeat it. Indeed 3) he ought not any

more to think back or examine conscience concerning past things, but where it is not certain that he omitted something, he can presume that it was declared.

VII. Practical observations.

A. When general confession certainly is not necessary, but only useful:

1. it is altogether expedient,[4] for continual and more abundant fruit, that penitents prepare themselves for some days by examination of conscience, excitation of sorrow, and chiefly by prayer;

[4] *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), n. 50, qq. 4 and 6.

2. nevertheless let them be admonished that they not examine themselves too laboriously;

3. and that there is not an obligation of confessing all mortal sins; whence neither by many questions are absolutely all sins or minute circumstances to be extorted from them;

4. if they have been subject to sins of lust, let them institute only one confession concerning these and never repeat it except in a general way;

5. girls who wish to institute a general confession not from a true spirit of progress but from some affection toward the confessor are to be kept away from it; likewise those who from true lightness would wish to repeat a general confession, e.g., in the time of a mission with all the missionaries, or who, thinking nothing concerning contrition and change of life, are wholly occupied in repeating confessions.

B. Let the confessor not immediately compel any penitents first confessing to him to general confession, even under the pretext that thus he will better direct their conscience; for thus not only would he impose an unreasonably grave burden upon many, but he would also trouble the consciences of many.[5]

[5] Ibid., q. 5.

C. If the confessor himself, by questioning, receives the whole confession, which with ruder men it is often better to do, let him run through offenses especially obvious for the state and condition, according to the order of the Decalogue, the precepts of the Church, and the duties of state (concerning which inquiry absolutely must be made); nevertheless he will sometimes be able usefully to depart from this order so that he may begin from graver things, which burden and shame more.

Indeed, several urge that he proceed through the different ages of life, so that first the sins of childhood up to first solemn communion or the years of puberty are examined; then the sins of adolescence and youth; afterward a change of life is considered in the assumption of a state or in another epoch of mature age. Nevertheless this sometimes prolongs confession excessively.

D. It is not to be counseled that general confessions be wholly written out; for ordinarily confusion is found in them. Written ones, however, can be accepted by the confessor and read; but if the general confession is necessary, the penitent himself, of himself and regularly, will be able to read it. It can indeed be permitted that the principal headings of the confession be written: for this helps order and memory.[6]

[6] Aertnijs, *Th. Past.*, n. 253.

Chapter II: Concerning Penitents Various According to the Condition of the Body

Question I: Concerning Children

I. Obligation of children. - Children who have attained the use of reason are held by the precept of confession, by which they are able sufficiently to discern between moral good and evil for sinning mortally, and to deliberate concerning themselves and concerning the ultimate end of the whole of life, or eternal salvation.

They generally obtain this discretion around the seventh year, a little before or after. Yet this does not depend on age alone, but also on sharpness of mind, quality of education, and other circumstances of time and place: thus they become mature earlier in warmer regions than in colder, in the city than in the countryside.[1]

[1] St. Charles Borromeo counsels that the priest begin to hear their confession from the sixth year for trial and habituation; but after the seventh let them be heard three or four times in a year; afterward, each month.

They are judged to enjoy the use of reason in relation to confession when they explain their sins distinctly, answer aptly the questions proposed by the confessor, and understand that grave offenses offend God or are punished by eternal punishments. On the contrary, if they can say nothing spontaneously, or recite nothing except formulas committed to memory, if they respond affirmatively or negatively to all questions proposed without any distinction, or if they very often contradict themselves in this way, they are deservedly judged to lack the use of reason. In doubt whether they have obtained sufficient discretion, as easily happens if they play with their fingers in the lattice, often look back at the things which are being done outside, etc., outside danger of death they are not bound to confess.

II. Importance of children's confessions. - The confessions of children are of the greatest importance, because the grace of the sacrament and the counsel of the confessor are an efficacious means both of preserving children from sin, of correcting their defects, and of promptly raising up those who have already fallen into mortal sins. Hence:

1. There is an obligation of watching over them so that children confess rightly and in the best manner. For although it belongs to the parish priest to instruct them concerning this matter, nevertheless it belongs to the confessor to recall that instruction to memory, or sometimes to supply for its defect and for the intelligence of the children.

2. If he notices that children, from incapacity or ignorance, do not know how they should confess, let him briefly instruct them concerning this matter, at least for the following confession.

3. But if from mere timidity they do not conduct themselves as they ought, let him fatherly exhort them and kindly induce them, and give courage, and in every way furnish help.

4. "But let him always use all charity and the gentler manners as far as can be done" (St. Alphonsus, *Prax. Conf.*, n. 90), lest they fear to accuse their sins or be turned away from the

sacrament.

5. Let him diligently exhort them to sincerity and draw them away from concealing sins, by saying a) that they are known to God everywhere present, b) that the confessor can say nothing concerning them, c) that concealing grave sins is a great sin and an offense of God.

6. He must also question them, both that he may procure the integrity of confession and that he may practically instruct them concerning the manner in which they ought to institute examination of conscience and accusation. Nevertheless let him first allow them to explain their sins, and let him not question unless:

a) they seem to fear and to be so troubled by shame that they say almost nothing;

b) after they have accused their sins: then let him add some questions also concerning matters about which they were silent;

c) generally let him ask whether the preceding confession was sincere, and whether in the present one they have concealed nothing.

7. In questions and admonitions, let him especially inculcate piety toward God, Christ, and the Blessed Virgin; obedience; love of justice, truth, modesty, and chastity; the necessity of fraternal charity and of a good and meek disposition; and the necessity of daily prayer for cultivating virtue.

III. Office of the confessor. - Hence it is understood how the confessor ought to conduct himself in the very administration of the sacrament.[2]

[2] Cf. St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, nn. 90-91; Reuter, o. c., nn. 100-105; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, n. 1848; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, c. II, a. 1, nn. 120-127; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 609-611; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), p. 191, n. 65, sch. I; Tanquerey, de Poen., nn. 517-520; Berardi, *Pr. conf.*, nn. 731-744; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 15, § 4; Poppe, *Geestelijke leiding voor Kinderen*; X., *La Confession frequente des petits enfants*.

A. Before confession: 1) Children are to be received with special kindness and fatherly affection, so that, far from being deterred from the sacred tribunal, they may rather willingly approach it and sincerely confess their sins.

2. If several children approach collectively, outside confession let him teach in common the things necessary for salvation and all things necessary for receiving the sacrament well, and let him add to this instruction a practical exercise of all those things which are to be done before confession, in it, and after it. On this occasion they should also be admonished concerning the sacramental seal, so that they may be found perfectly sincere.

3. Let him urge them to explain their sins, especially if they seem to be troubled by fear and shame.

B. In confession: 1) At the beginning let them freely be allowed to speak and explain their sins.

2. After the things which they themselves have accused, or if they fail in this, let them be helped by opportune questions such as: whether morning and evening they recited prayers; whether

on Sundays and feast days they were present at Mass, whether at it they chatted; whether they swore, spoke irreverently about sacred things, or used indecorous words; whether they were disobedient to parents, lacked due reverence toward them, mocked elders; whether they quarreled with others, gave way to anger or envy, struck others or called them by an insulting name, or furnished bad example; whether they spoke bad words, or also what they said, whether they played badly with other children, and, if they affirm this, what they did, whether they committed a shameful thing, whether they were indecent alone; whether they committed little thefts or brought harm upon others; whether they committed lies, in jest or for harming others; whether they ate meat on forbidden days; whether they frequent a Catholic school, whether they study catechism, etc. It should be noted, however, a) that not all these questions are to be put, but various ones according to various opportunity: let the confessor not be excessive in questioning, lest children conceive a horror of confession;

b) it will often be useful to use suggestive questions, e.g.: and now tell me how many times you did this? five times, ten times? etc.;

c) concerning chastity, let him propose only questions which do not excite the curiosity of the innocent, and yet furnish the guilty an occasion of manifesting their offenses, for there are girls and boys who say nothing about this matter unless they are questioned;

d) at the end let this be added: whether they have concealed some sin.

C. After the confession has been heard: 1) Children are to be instructed concerning the means to be used for avoiding sins, and concerning the foulness of sin, yet without exhibiting as grave a sin which is only light; but let them also be taught to avoid light sins so that they may please Christ Jesus.

2. They are to be exhorted to contrition not by a long exhortation, which perhaps, distracted in mind, they will not understand, but a) by obvious concepts, by saying, for example, that God is everywhere present, that grave sin renders the soul foul after the likeness of the devil and an enemy of God, that grace and virtue render it like an angel, that sin is an offense of God more horrible than an offense of one's father, that God wills to crown the good in heaven and that Christ died for this, etc.; likewise b) by questions accommodated to their grasp, e.g.: My son, do you love God, who is your Lord, so great and good, who created you and died for you? Do you wish to afflict anew Christ dead and suffering for you? Do you wish gravely to offend your best heavenly Father, who confers so many benefits? Do you not grieve for the sins by which you have merited hell and offended Jesus and God? Could you sustain the fire of hell for a quarter of an hour? etc. If they have accused venial sins, it is better to speak to them concerning the punishments of purgatory, concerning the displeasure of God, and especially concerning the love of God and of Christ. For since in them there is neither malice nor affection for sin nor inveterate passions, by the help of divine grace they are easily disposed to an act of charity and even of perfect contrition.

3. A penance fitting their age will be enjoined, lighter than for adults, which they may perform immediately lest it fall into oblivion. On this occasion it should also be inculcated upon them to be devout toward the Blessed Virgin and the guardian angel, and to pray daily for amendment of sins and a good life.

D. As regards absolution: 1) It certainly cannot be denied to children who have committed grave sins, if otherwise they seem sufficiently disposed; whence the practice of those who dismiss without absolution those who have not yet been admitted to first communion is altogether to be reprehended. Nor should it be held as a sign of indisposition if around the confessional they act childishly, play, laugh, since these things are of natural levity and lack of consideration and in themselves are not grave.

2. But if there is doubt whether they have the use of reason, or are sufficiently disposed, they are to be absolved under condition: if you are capable, in danger of death, or when the precept of annual confession urges; indeed as often as they accuse those things which of themselves are mortal, lest, namely, they remain in the state of sin if perhaps they have sinned gravely.

3. But if they have accused only venial sins, let him excite them to contrition, and if they are sufficiently disposed, they are to be absolved, lest they lack sacramental grace. If after exhortation they remain doubtfully disposed, because, for example, there is doubt concerning their sufficient discretion, they are not to be absolved, even under condition, because a sufficient reason is lacking for exposing the sacrament to nullity; unless sometimes there is reason for fearing that perhaps they are subject to some hidden mortal sin.

IV. Observations.

1. Even if shameful acts are accused, not rarely it is expedient to know whether they were only things against decency and civility. But if this has been known, the child is altogether to be instructed. If, however, he is truly detected to have done shameful things, he must altogether be led away from these. Then also he is rightly questioned (by an indirect way) whether he sleeps with another, and is modest in bed.

2. Dishonorable actions of children who are still ignorant of lust are for the most part not to be held as mortal sins, because either they did not have venereal commotion, or they do not yet apprehend its malice. In practice, however, the confessor is bound to correct such children more severely, so that they may abhor all uncleanness; yet at the same time let him speak in a fatherly manner, lest afterward, relapsing, they conceal sins from fear.

3. Nevertheless there are found in cities and industrial regions children corrupted early, in whom knowledge and malice of lust have preceded age, and concerning whom it must be said: So little a child and so great a sinner!

4. Grave danger and a proximate occasion can arise if boys and girls, at least after the seventh year and indeed even before, lie down in the same bed. In this matter parents are to be severely reproved, nor is excuse because of poverty or narrowness of place easily to be admitted. But if it absolutely cannot be done otherwise, at least the danger is to be diminished by parents putting sons and daughters to bed clothed, and watching until they have given themselves to sleep; and besides, let them bring it about that one of the sons (or one daughter) whom they can better trust admonish them concerning the least attempt at evil. "But if from confession the confessor has known the proximate occasion, he must treat the children like others constituted in a proximate occasion, and sometimes he must compel them to insist with their

parents for separation. Nor does some suspicion or information among the parents themselves seem always to have to be estimated so highly when they are little children as defamation is otherwise estimated" (Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 610-611).

5. If it happens that children are recidivists in grave sins, of themselves they are to be treated like adults, e.g., if they enjoy perfect discretion, because there is hope that they will amend themselves and return. Often, however, there is doubt whether they have perfect use of reason, and then they are rather to be absolved, because they do not easily understand the delay of absolution, and therefore no fruit is hoped from it.

6. An obligation of asking pardon from parents for a determinate matter is not to be imposed upon children, because this is above their strength; nor an obligation of restoring, because they do not understand this obligation and ordinarily are unequal to restoring; with exception of the case in which the child still has the thing taken away: for then restitution is to be enjoined, so that he may learn to abhor theft.

7. Let the confessor altogether provide that he unteach children who erroneously think that what is only venial is mortal: for not rarely it happens that children are wrongly instructed in this matter by mothers and deterred from light sins under the penalty of hell (e.g., from a light theft, lie, disobedience). Yet care must be taken that they retain horror of even the lightest sin.

Question II: Concerning the Half-Witted and Deaf-Mutes

I. The perpetually insane cannot receive absolution, of which they are incapable; not so the half-witted (*etourdis, demi-sots, simplots*):

a) If these certainly can distinguish between moral good and evil, although confusedly, and otherwise seem well disposed, they can be absolved not only once, but several times in a year. But since, because of slowness of mind and weakness of memory, they can scarcely retain in memory even necessary truths, let the confessor take care to dispose them in such a way that they may elicit the necessary acts of faith, hope, and contrition, proceeding thus for example: Do you believe in one God? Do you believe that He punishes the evil and bestows rewards on the good? Do you believe that there are three persons in God, distinct and perfectly equal, and that the Son of God, because of us, was made man and by His blood redeemed us? And so forth for the motives of contrition.

b) If there is doubt concerning sufficient use of reason and whether they can sin gravely or not, they are to be instructed and disposed in the best manner in which this can be done, and absolved under condition in danger of death; indeed several times in life, at least once in a year, and as often as it is probable that they are in the state of mortal sin, lest, namely, they remain in sin if perhaps they have committed any.

c) As Reuter notes (o. c., n. 192), it is not a sufficient sign of discretion that someone reverences the clergy, rightly executes some commands, bends the knees, strikes the breast, because he can do these things because he sees them being done by another. But signs such as were indicated for children suffice.

II. Concerning deaf-mutes. - a) These, of themselves and grave inconvenience being excluded, are bound to write their confession if they can write and cannot otherwise confess integrally. But because this is considered by some as an extraordinary means, let it not be strictly imposed unless they could not confess in any other way at all; but let them be gently induced to do this if they can write (e.g., on a slate tablet), since thus the integrity of confession is better procured. To avoid the danger of harming the seal, the confession having been completed, immediately in the presence of the penitent, the writing should be destroyed.

b) Since today they can be instructed rather easily, the parish priest, or also the confessor, must take care that, as far as can be done, they are sent to those schools where they can learn Christian doctrine, so that they may better confess and detest their sins.

c) But if they have not been instructed by these new methods, let the confessor first inquire from their relatives what sins they more frequently commit and what signs they are accustomed to give; then let him lead them into some hidden place, where by signs they may try to declare certain sins at least in a confused way and to express their contrition. Likewise by certain signs, e.g., by raising the eyes and hands to heaven, by showing the crucifix, let him exhort them to contrition, and let him absolve them absolutely or conditionally according as he will be certain or doubtful concerning their capacity. In a similar manner also he can indicate the penance, e.g., by showing the rosary or a certain decade of it.

III. Observations.

1. If the confessor notices not at the beginning but in the course of confession that the penitent is somewhat deaf, he cannot, generally, lead him before those standing by into a remote place or admonish him to return at another time, when, namely, as easily happens, he would introduce suspicion of mortal sin. On the contrary, he can do this if he notices it altogether at the beginning.

2. In former times they thought that one deaf and at the same time mute and blind from birth should be held as perpetually insane, as incapable of instruction. In our age, however, the more cultivated art of instruction does not exclude even such persons from education, and, although the matter is more difficult, nevertheless it is not judged impossible.

3. "If because of lack of skill in the language the confessor cannot perceive all mortal sins, the penitent is to be sent, if it can conveniently be done, to another skilled in the language; but if he cannot be sent back without grave inconvenience and has indicated at least one certain sin, he can be absolved in a time when precept or necessity urges, such as also the state of mortal sin of a travelling man who for a short time cannot have a confessor; for then formal integrity suffices. Nevertheless the penitent is bound, when an occasion is given, to confess to another the mortal sins which now were not understood by the confessor. Hence also he can be silent about sins which he certainly knows are not understood. But if he has only venial sins, he can approach a confessor less skilled in the language, the other being neglected... Finally, if the confessor plainly does not understand the language of the penitent, the latter can be absolved in necessity, if he accuses himself by signs in general" (Reuter, *Neo-conf.*, n. 196). He can also

use an interpreter, but this is not strictly obligatory, as is evident from the response of the Holy Office, 28 Feb. 1633, provided that by signs he can manifest at least sin in general.

For the hearing of those whose language the confessor does not know, a schema of questions in various languages corresponding to one another, edited by D'Herbigny, can be useful: *Prudens 16 linguarum confessarius*. Nevertheless it does not suffice for every case: for the rude generally do not understand cultivated language, but are accustomed to use a common idiom or special terms, especially for designating certain sins; indeed they are not always able to read.

Question III: Concerning Adolescents and Young Persons

I. Importance of the confession of young persons. - Let the confessor place before his eyes:

1. that this matter of forming youth is of so much greater importance, as youth is exposed to more and graver dangers, both generally from the awakening of passions, and especially in present times, from worldly or perverse companions, harmful readings, depraved schools, dangerous amusements, human fear, etc.;

2. that in order to confer his work with fruit, it is first necessary a) that he bind to himself the souls of young persons and win their confidence, by treating them cordially and with fully fatherly affection, yet in a manner always worthy and manly; b) that he beware lest he act severely with them, but sympathize with their fragility and inexperience: then they will learn to trust in their own strength and to carry out the admonitions of the confessor, by which they will be raised up;

3. then, that there is need that he lead them to frequent confession, say each month or each week, by which it happens that a) they are preserved from a habit of sin, b) they become accustomed to virtue and piety, c) they also approach the sacraments more often in the rest of life;

4. that it is best that they have a guide who directs them so that they may learn: a) to moderate their passions, b) to avoid dangers, c) to tend toward the vocation which God has destined for them.[1]

[1] Cf. Reuter, o. c., nn. 106-109; St. Alphonsus, *Pr. Conf.*, nn. 92-93; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 128-138; *Th. M.*, II, nn. 340-344; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1849-1850; *Theol. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), p. 192, n. 65, sch. II, and p. 239, n. 85; P. X. Nicolay, *A la conquete des ames. Essai de psychologie et de pratique pastorale. Moralite des enfants et des jeunes gens*; De Saegher, *Bidden en strijden*; Salsmans, *Geestelijke leiding voor studenten*, in *Pastor Bonus*, 1920 and 1925.

II. Concerning moderating passions. - That they may learn to moderate passions it is necessary:

1. To investigate what is their predominant passion, which becomes known rather easily from their ordinary manner of thinking, speaking, and acting.

2. To manifest to them the investigations made, whereby they may be persuaded concerning the necessity of correcting themselves; this will be easier if it is shown to them what sort of man he will become who neglected to correct, in youthful age, those defects which they themselves have.

3. To suggest opportune means against the respective defects. Thus to those who think only of delight, let him impose acting from love of duty and precept; otherwise they will throw themselves into prohibited delights and lead a useless life. To those who are vehement, more ardent, irascible, let him prescribe moderation; otherwise, capable of every excess, they will at least be difficult and troublesome in society. To those who labor under laziness and lack energy and spirit, let him prescribe strenuous labor and continual effort of will, lest they become altogether useless. Those who envy others let him seriously admonish, because they will easily come to calumnies and crimes.[2]

[2] Quite commonly, even today, four principal temperaments are distinguished, which nevertheless are often found mixed in one and the same individual, and indeed in various degrees, yet in such a way that one is accustomed to dominate. Among men, namely, some are more sensitive because they feel more vividly; others more active because they exercise a more vehement reaction upon sensations. Among the former, some are strong by abundance of blood, others by organization of nerves; among the latter, some act more promptly and intensely, as the choleric; others act only slowly and remissly, as the phlegmatic. Hence four temperaments:

4. Especially let confessors watch that they be preserved immune from the corruption of the age and from the allurements of the flesh, or, having fallen into immodesty, immediately be raised up, both because of the universality of the danger, the facility of the fall, and the difficulty of amendment.

5. For the sake of transforming the character of young persons the confessor needs a) great firmness of soul in pursuing the end and meekness in admonishing, b) great prudence and right judgment, by which he adapts himself to the diverse dispositions of young persons, c) much patience, because it is a work of longer duration.

III. Concerning dangers to be warded off. - The principal dangers from which they are to be kept are enumerated:

a) harmful readings, both to faith and to morals; b) likewise shameful or impious conversations; c) worldly amusements which in our age are so dangerous, e.g., dances, spectacles, cinema, more frequent pleasure trips which weaken the religious sense; d) excessive familiarity with the other sex: it is generally to be inculcated upon girls that, as far as can be done, they abstain from the society and conversation of males; e) corrupted companions who allure to immodesty, or manifest themselves indifferent in religion, impious, or unbelieving, who are found even in institutes of Catholic youth, and are to be fled as emissaries of the devil and denounced to superiors;[3] f) excessive friendly familiarity with one companion, which, even if begun for a good end, frequently degenerates into a friendship not pure.

[3] Concerning this case see *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, t. IX, p. 410 sq. (May 1914).

IV. Concerning vocation and election of state. - If an adolescent makes mention of election of state, let the confessor direct him toward his true vocation. For this it is necessary to recall:

1. That it is not his part to determine the vocation of the penitent, but only to uncover the vocation given by God: for vocation is a special destination which God chooses and gives to someone with the qualities and helps necessary for this.

2. That God always makes the things necessary for a man to follow his vocation, both by giving the required aptitudes and by placing him in suitable external circumstances, by which to correspond to the vocation of God, if he does not sin, is at least possible.

3. That God calls someone in various ways, especially three:

a) by a sudden and extraordinary vocation, as He did for St. Paul;

b) by means of inspirations by which, especially during prayer, He sweetly inclines toward such a mode of living, so that the will of God is clearly evident; the inclination must be constant, tranquil, and of pure intention;

c) by the sole means of natural reflection, by which someone with tranquil mind and right soul examines what state of life is more congruent with his aspirations, dispositions, means and intentions, and salvation. The two latter modes are often joined, for inclination without reflection easily exposes to fallacy, just as also sometimes reflection without inclination does.

4. For knowing the vocation of the penitent, just as he himself, so also the confessor must pray, and examine the dispositions, aspirations, qualities, means, and intentions of the young person, and remove every influence of human consideration, solicitous concerning the will of God alone.

5. But once the matter has been decided, the penitent is to be directed with great firmness against whatever reluctances and difficulties occur, or considerations stirred up by self-love or fear of deception. For obstacles have their origin either from a more vivid imagination, from a hesitating mind, from nature rebelling, or from the devil.

V. Especially A. concerning the religious state: 1) as to aptitude, there are necessary: good health, relatively sufficient intelligence with right judgment, whence the notably melancholic or scrupulous are not suitable; a good character which can bear the burdens of common life; piety; 2) as to the end, let it be supernatural, e.g., holiness, zeal, reparation, or preservation; not natural or worldly, such as convenience of life, complacence of parents, or ambition for honors; 3) as to conservation of vocation, the confessor must enjoin the caution of secrecy, assiduous prayer and frequenting of the sacraments, separation from the world, namely, as far as can be done, from every dissipation, worldly association, worldly amusements.

B. For the priestly state in the world, the confessor must seriously examine sufficient capacity, especially intellectual capacity and competent knowledge, chiefly practical judgment, a right end (as for a religious) and probity of life. Aspirants to the priesthood, just as to religion, must be holy, indeed rather holier because they remain in the dangers of the age; and therefore, that someone may become a good priest in the world, it is necessary that first he has led a very exemplary life, remote from worldly amusements, from idleness and bad companions, and devoted to prayer and frequenting of the sacraments, and especially chaste; otherwise he exposes himself to danger of damnation.

It should be noted that these things are to be understood concerning indications of the divine will or concerning vocation in first act and proximate aptitude, for vocation formally and in second act is given by the bishop, in the name of Christ.

C. For the matrimonial state, to which most men are destined by a common vocation, let the confessor admonish adolescents 1) that they not think prematurely about entering marriage or begin courtship, or that girls not flit altogether lightly among several suitors; 2) that they soon refer every purpose or proposal of marriage to parents, to seek their counsel and assent, and never wish to contract marriage with dishonor to the family or against unwilling parents, unless they have a just cause by which they are excused; 3) that they propose an honest end in contracting marriage: namely, not mere pleasure, but their own salvation and that of children, and a happy mutual life in honesty and virtue; 4) that they not contract betrothal unless marriage is already imminent.

But betrothed persons a) are to be taught that, as regards carnal delight, nothing more is licit for them than for those altogether free; wherefore, lest they succumb to temptations, let them beware excessive familiarity and not defer the celebration of marriage for long; but especially let them beware, both because of danger and because scandal must be avoided, lest they cohabit in the same house; b) they are to be exhorted to confess their sins diligently and to approach the holy Eucharist and the sacrament of matrimony piously; c) although it belongs to the proper parish priest to teach the betrothed the obligations of the conjugal state, nevertheless they are also usefully admonished briefly by the confessor concerning those things which are licit or not licit in marriage, concerning preserving peace, and concerning offspring to be preserved, baptized, and educated.

D. As regards the state of virginity in the world, for girls "who desire to consecrate their virginity to Jesus Christ in the world, let the confessor not permit them to vow chastity perpetually unless he knows that they are well founded in virtues, and taught in the rules of the spiritual life, and especially exercised in prayer. In the beginning he can permit them only to vow chastity for some determinate time, namely from the solemnity of one feast to another." Thus St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, n. 93.

VI. Concerning courtships.[4] - On the occasion of entering marriage courtship is commonly made, by which name is usually called the conversation of lovers with a view to future marriage, or at least under its pretext. Concerning this it must be said:

[4] Cf. Haine, *Th. M.*, I, q. 105; Marc, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 825-828; *Th. Mechl.*, de Poen. (4), n. 85; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 340-344; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, note 145 ad n. 460; Ballerini, de Poen., I, nn. 205-212; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 433-434.

A. Courtship which is made with a view to future marriage of itself is licit. For no one is bound to marry an unknown person, but each one can test with what character, what morals, and what qualities that person is furnished. Hence in most regions visits of lovers with a view to marriage have so entered the morals of the people that they must be called necessary.

Yet they are dangerous, especially among younger and less God-fearing persons, because they easily furnish an occasion of sinning against chastity, chiefly where greater familiarity and liberty begin, and the time of marriage approaches, as experience establishes and is easily understood from the depravity of concupiscence.

B. Courtship is illicit among persons who cannot, or do not seriously intend to, contract marriage within a reasonable time. For serious hope of future marriage is the only reason from which courtship can become licit; and with this absent, there would not be a legitimate cause for exposing oneself to danger. Now, to contract marriage:

1. those cannot who lack either an age suitable for establishing a family matter (for otherwise courtship would be too prolonged), or immunity from an impediment of marriage unless there is present a legitimate cause for seeking dispensation, or liberty, as sometimes soldiers, or sons of families if parents justly dissent because of the unworthiness of the person with whom they wish to associate, or because of need of the help of children;

2. those do not seriously intend, at least ordinarily, however much they protest, who are rich young men with respect to a poor girl, or who already from the first conversations solicit the girl to sin, or at least refuse the necessary cautions; or who after a reasonable time do not at all manifest the proposal of marriage, or continually defer nuptials without a just cause;

3. those cannot or do not will within a reasonable time who continue courtship with danger of fall for years. What time is legitimate cannot be defined by a certain rule for all cases, but is left to prudent judgment according to diverse circumstances; for making this judgment the practice of the God-fearing and the cautious or incautious manner of conversing contribute much. Generally speaking, if marriage is contracted within a year or a little more, the time does not exceed measure. But if it has already lasted too long, let the confessor take care that either it be broken off, or suspended for a time, or marriage be contracted as soon as possible.

C. That it may be carried out in an honorable manner and an occasion of sinning be turned away, courtship must be moderated by effective cautions, of which sort are:

1. that lovers not dwell under the same roof, at least for long, because of the greatest danger arising from excessive association and familiarity;

2. that as soon as possible they obtain the consent of parents (or of those who are in the place of parents for them): for if they frequent one another against the will or without the knowledge of parents, they will visit one another secretly with great danger;

3. that one alone with one alone not remain in places remote from the sight of others, or at nighttime; for if this is done not by chance but deliberately, it will be done only from a cause of lust or with the highest danger. This is a caution of the greatest moment, so that the obligation of parents (especially mothers) of diligently watching in this matter cannot be sufficiently urged by confessors as grave, not only by reason of conscience, but also from fear lest daughters, corrupted and dishonored in the paternal home, grow old there;

4. that they not have visits too frequent or protracted, which beget familiarity and passion. This is to be judged by the estimation of prudent persons: generally once or twice in a week for one or another hour is not immoderate; and what is immoderate can even be tolerated if there is fear lest prosperous nuptials be lost, provided that stricter cautions are observed;

5. that they avoid all things which can increase danger, especially immodest touches, embraces, and kisses. This must be especially inculcated after betrothal has been entered, or when marriage is imminent, since the bridegroom regards the bride as his own, the imagination of marriage soon to follow stirs lust, and fear of pregnancy vanishes;

6. that they fortify themselves in a special manner by spiritual aids, especially by frequenting the sacraments.

D. For lovers and the betrothed, honorable embraces, kisses, and touches are licit, for manifesting and fostering love, according to the custom of the country; not however kisses or embraces that are close, more often repeated and protracted for a notable time, because ordinarily they constitute a proximate danger of sinning, namely of consenting to venereal delight. And just as the love of betrothed persons is honorable, so also is the sensible delight which follows from that love and its manifestation, provided that it is not intended alone for its own sake, but because of another honest end: fostering love or a sign of benevolence. But if venereal delight perhaps is going to arise, a sufficient reason is present for permitting it, provided that consent to it is excluded. Yet one who in these demonstrations feels more imminent seminal emission must then gently interrupt the demonstration, if he can do so conveniently.

E. The bride is especially to be exhorted 1) that she permit nothing which is reserved to marriage, both that she may consult her own dignity and the happiness of marriage. For a) if the bridegroom acts insolently with the girl, with what reverence, civility, and moderation will he conduct himself toward his subject wife? b) otherwise in a short time it will happen that the bride is already so in the power of the bridegroom that she no longer has the option of breaking the betrothal or the relations; c) nuptials will already be less lovable for the man, if before marriage he is in some way satiated; d) the more carnal lust is fostered before nuptials, the less they will be joined because of a nobler affection;

2. that she not admit manifestations of love that are too free or too many, nor a fortiori solicit them: let her know that many things can more easily be exercised by her than by a young man without carnal commotion; whence let her fear cooperating in the sin of the bridegroom. Nevertheless she does not sin if she moderately admits kisses which are exteriorly honorable, although she suspects a less good intention: for she consents only to the exterior action, not to the internal intention.[5]

[5] Cf. Vermeersch, *De Castitate*, pp. 297-298.

F. If courtship is for some persons a proximate occasion of sinning, they must:

1. break it off, if without grave harm they can renounce the present marriage and await the occasion of another marriage of equal value: for then the occasion of sin is voluntary;

2. amend it, if they cannot renounce that marriage without sin or without grave harm: e.g., because of betrothal, offspring to be legitimated, grave lawsuits to be avoided, another suitable marriage scarcely to be hoped for. For then the occasion is morally necessary. But then let them contract marriage as soon as possible, and meanwhile let them never be alone together; for this end let the girl ask her mother or sister never to depart while the lover is present;

3. suspend it for a time, or at least diminish it notably, if hope of marriage is altogether remote (e.g., after the death of parents); for then the occasion is not here and now necessary, and temporal separation is to be imposed.

VII. Concerning chastity and the vice of self-abuse. - Young persons of either sex are frequently subject to the vice of self-abuse, or the solitary sin against the Sixth, or are exposed to the danger of contracting it; wherefore let the confessor watch so that adolescents be preserved from it, or, if they have contracted it, extirpate it.

Let the confessor inspire in them: firm hope and persuasion of certain victory; hatred of the vice; the strength of will to be acquired through a firm and strong manner of acting; moderate mortifications; renewal of purpose; confidence, so that they not think that they have immediately consented; aspiration of an ideal life; and confession to be instituted immediately after a fall, as much as possible before the same confessor.

But careful inquiry must be made concerning the time from which they have been given to the vice, concerning their bodily constitution, and concerning the circumstances of the sin.

As to the cause of the vice, however, it must be altogether noted:

1. There are young persons of either sex who, ensnared by the habit of self-abuse, or because of a nervous or sanguine bodily constitution, experience vehement temptations, and although they resist and pray, nevertheless suffer seminal emission. Let them know that emissions which they truly suffer unwillingly are without sin.

2. There are young persons who first resist temptation, but afterward, if the temptation continues to press, are accustomed to yield to it, thinking that resistance is useless. These are to be encouraged to further resistance: for perhaps soon there will follow an emission which, as having followed apart from the will, will be inculpable.

3. Finally there are found others who, lying down in bed, suffer vehement temptations of the flesh, to which, if they continue to oppose positive resistance, they cannot fall asleep. These are to be urged that, divine help having been implored, and dissent elicited, they conduct themselves passively with safe conscience, whatever happens (St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, l. V, n. 9).

4. More rarely there are found abnormal persons who are led by a blind and almost insuperable impulse to procure self-abuse actively for themselves; concerning this case, which requires greater prudence, it will be said in q. 5.

VIII. Observations.

A. "As regards penances to be enjoined or counseled, those are more useful for adolescents which help to implant a good custom or extirpate an evil one, e.g., 1) that for a time they duly discharge morning and evening prayers; or 2) that they make an examination in the evening for eight days; or 3) that they devoutly be present at the sacrifice of Mass (for some days) and offer it for obtaining a certain virtue or extirpating a vice; 4) if they are given to drinking, that in the next week (or month) they not approach an eating-house, not associate with these or those companions, or that for some days in honor of Christ or the Blessed Virgin or the guardian angel or a saint, outside the time of lunch and dinner, they eat or drink nothing; 5) if they are given to play, let them similarly abstain for a time; 6) if they are given to idleness, that for the next fifteen days they study for an hour in the morning and for an hour after lunch; let them read a serious or spiritual book, approach an image of

the Blessed Virgin hung in their room, and ask through her intercession the grace of spending well time so precious, granted from the merits of Christ for working out salvation; 7) if they are negligent in divine things, that for some weeks they never be absent from catechism, sermon, Mass, etc. And one must proceed similarly in other customs" (Reuter, *Neo-confessarius*, n. 108).

B. Since in our age all men of whatever condition wish to inquire into and read curious things, all are to be exhorted to read good books: honorable ones, which licitly recreate; serious ones, which usefully instruct; especially pious ones, which induce to virtue and devotion. Besides, let them altogether abstain from reading evil writings, daily papers, newspapers, whether obscene or impious, especially those which attack the Catholic faith or all religion.

C. For those who go to the university or labor in industrial workshops, associations of Catholic students or workers are to be commended, by which their Christian life may be protected. And it is also of the highest importance that these young persons have a pious and learned priest to whom they can faithfully expose not only the motions and temptations of their soul, but also the difficulties and objections which they have heard against the faith, so that those may be dissolved. And also they are to be prudently taught concerning dangers, if they are exposed to any, as to chastity, and, if necessary, concerning things pertaining to sexual life.

D. Young persons are especially to be questioned concerning depraved thoughts, indecency in speech, idleness and the manner of spending time, squandering money, vanity in dress, etc. They are to be exhorted to conceive horror of excessive familiarity or morose looking at the other sex, and of all foul speech; indeed that they rebuke and flee companions who wish to mix in conversations about dishonorable things and to seize the occasion of secret conversation. Wherefore, excepting the most approved, let rather three than only two walk and play together.

1. Those who are sensitive and sanguine feel promptly and vividly, but not intensely and perseveringly; wherefore they are very unstable. Hence, if they pursue piety and devotion, they easily sin and conceive contrition, but, forgetful of promises, soon relapse into sin. Among the sanguine are numbered Mark Antony, Louis XIV, and Mirabeau.

2. Those who are sensitive and nervous feel much more intensely and durably; whence also in them passions, whether toward good or toward evil, are much more vehement (and therefore moral character depends especially on the object toward which they turn themselves). Yet they likewise have some instability from the diverse emotions to which they are given (e.g., Voltaire, Frederick II), and easily become melancholic when they cannot attain the ideal perfection which they pursue (thus Pascal).

3. The choleric act not only intensely but perseveringly with the greatest force; they are ambitious, wish to dominate others, and to acquire glory in whatever way. Thus Caesar, Cromwell, Napoleon I.

4. The phlegmatic are of two kinds: some weaker, almost destitute of all energy; others stronger, who, although more coldly and slowly, nevertheless can act with great vigor and unconquered constancy. Thus are many Dutch, among whom William, afterward made king of England, stood out.

Cf. concerning these Fouillee, *Temperament et Caracteres*, Paris, 1895.

Let the confessor strive with all his strength to help younger persons so that whatever good is in their character he may assiduously cultivate, whatever evil he may correct by contrary acts. The psychological notion of the various temperaments is especially useful to him, so that he may direct his penitents more safely to the practice of the virtues:

1. The sanguine are gentle, affable, spirited, liberal, tractable, but also fervid, contentious, prone to pleasures and loves: joyful and light of soul, they love delights, willingly enter friendships, are lovers of society, etc. They are to be urged both to strive to restrain fantasy and imbue it with pious images, to renounce the pleasures of the senses in lesser matters so that they may learn to gain victory over themselves, to put on graver morals, to say farewell to vanities and empty friendships; and to accomplish all things more deliberately and constantly from conviction and love of due duty, lest, moved by passing ardor, they assume something beyond their strength, and afterward, cast down in soul, fall into despair. Similar things hold, proportion having been kept, concerning the nervous; for these are very excited, most prone to love, whence they easily conceive affection, and are subject to venereal commotions. Yet they are changeable and fanciful, prone to impatience and jealousy; whence among them love from tenderness sometimes is converted into aversion.

2. The choleric are bold, spirited for undertaking, generous; but also precipitate, impatient, irascible, proud, inhuman, hard, tenacious in purposes conceived. These, as also the nervous, are to be moderated lest, because of too much ardor, they indulge excesses, but especially they are to be moved to turn their passions to good ends. Besides they are to be fortified against the dangers of anger, vengeance, hatred, and enmities, and admonished that they distrust themselves.

3. The melancholic are circumspect, modest, thoughtful, constant; but also singular, suspicious, lovers of their own judgment, critical: they can scarcely enter friendship, love solitude, are moved to hatred, envy, vengeance. These need consolation, lest they be oppressed by sadness and desperation; they must avoid solitude, idleness, and envy; they are to be occupied in useful labor, exercised in virtues toward the neighbor.

4. The phlegmatic are meek, faithful, peaceful, docile, but also can be pusillanimous, inconstant, idle, tepid; they are with difficulty excited to good, lack fervid passions, are easily content with mediocrity, love peace and quiet, indeed are accustomed falsely to attribute peace and rest to virtue. These are to be animated and excited lest they become drowsy, lazy, and lax; yet they are not to be sharply reprehended lest they cast down their spirit. They are to be lifted up to consideration of eternal things so that they may despise earthly goods and evils, and make efforts toward greater things.

Question IV: Concerning Men and Women

I. Importance of the confession of men. - Regularly, in ministering Penance, men are to be preferred to women, both because more often they have committed greater sins and are more in need of confession, and because their confessions are more fruitful, as of those who are furnished with

greater reflection and constancy, and because, if they are instituted and preserved in Christian life, the good will be better, which extends more broadly and is of greater efficacy. Hence greater care is to be expended upon them than upon pious women, as being more necessary and useful; especially upon those who are not much solicitous concerning piety and rarely confess, concerning whom we shall speak specially in the present matter.[1]

[1] Cf. Reuter-Lehmkuhl, *Neo-conf.*, nn. 118 a and b; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 15, § 2; Berardi, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 1134 and 1083.

But in our times it is to be lamented that many men, especially in greater cities and industrial regions, and from almost all ranks, exist alienated from frequenting the sacraments and the exercise of religion. There are several causes of this evil:

1. several are so immersed in material and temporal things that they can scarcely lift the soul to higher things;

2. then morals exist depraved, which many do not wish to amend, or despair that they can amend, whence it happens that they exclude themselves from the sacraments of the Church;

3. finally faith itself languishes or even is extinguished, which is the root of all Christian life and honesty of morals. This loss of faith is prepared and effected by:

a) curiosity for knowing, pride, and the striving for every kind of liberty and dissolution, which bears any subjection with difficulty;

b) desire of reading impious and irreligious things, and the practice of conversing with unbelievers, who are now found not only among cultivated men but even among the common people themselves;

c) pleasures and lust, which extends very widely and, every shame having been laid aside, goes forth into public; indeed it is openly praised, or now is not regarded as a vice, or is counseled by physicians themselves;

d) immoderate labors, whether from necessity for sustenance, or from an immoderate thirst for temporal goods, or from an excessive part given to public or social life, which leave no time for thinking of heavenly things and for piety.

II. Manner of acting with men. - That a remedy may be furnished for the aforesaid evils: 1) care must be taken that men are not forced to wait, lest, namely, they go away and no longer wish to return; indeed if possible, let the confessor hear them before women, because they are more impatient and occupied; whence it is to be feared that they go away, while women more easily return;

2. they are to be received with a joyful countenance and affectionate affability, so that they understand that the confessor gladly hears their confession, even if they are of inferior condition;

3. rules of perfection (excepting religious men or very pious men) are not to be suggested to them; but rather the confessor will be wholly in this, that they conceive a great horror against mortal sin and satisfy the duties of their proper state;

4. toward them one must proceed with greater indulgence and every possible kindness, declaring to them only those obligations concerning whose existence there can be no doubt; sincerely, however, indeed let the confessor be altogether firm and inflexible if it is a question of flight from a voluntary and proximate occasion, of the burden of restoring, and of proper duties; excessive kindness in this would be cruelty;

5. they are not to be rebuked and scolded with harsh manners, but rather to be beseeched with fatherly charity, from which it will happen that, if the confessor must absolutely require something, they understand that he acts from the necessity of office and from true charity, and cannot do otherwise, for their good;

6. in one word, care must be taken that they remain content; hence thus they are allured to return, and this especially if they are great sinners, or if they rarely approach the sacrament.

III. Special counsels. - Especially a) one must insist that men joined in matrimony not neglect care of the family and domestic life, but hold this obligation as principal;

b) nevertheless they are not to be enclosed between domestic walls, lest they abstain from public affairs, especially good Catholics; but they are to be exhorted, as far as possible, to enter assemblies for the defense of religion and social order;

c) attention must be given to what they read and whom they frequent, so that they decline association with the impious and are turned away from depraved books or newspapers; the more cultivated from those which spread the errors of liberalism and indifferentism, the common people from socialistic writings; indeed good books or daily papers are prudently to be commended to them.

IV. Danger in the confessions of women.[2] - No one will deny that of all the rocks upon which a priest can strike in this age, none is more mournful and full of dangers; whence all authors of moral, ascetical, or pastoral theology, and all who have written for priests devoted to the sacred ministry, insist that the relations of confessors and penitents of the female sex be duly regulated. The reasons for this are:

[2] Cf. Reuter, o. c., nn. 110-113; St. Alphonsus, *Pr. Conf.*, nn. 110-120; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 15, § 3; Berardi, *Pr. Conf.*, nn. 1135 and 1083; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 139-143.

1. The female character: a) ordinarily women, furnished with vivid imagination and sensibility, manifest lesser reason and will, whence they are moved by sensible things, inconsiderate and inconstant; curiously inquiring and speaking much; adhering more to minute circumstances than to solid and immutable principles; easily moving complaints and exaggerating many things, even without knowing it; b) weaker by nature and conscious of their own infirmity, they attempt to attain their end by various artifices, roundabout ways, and insinuations, and with marvelous patience; c) made for man, and naturally subject to him, they are easily subjected to him, gladly enjoy his society, naturally seek him, especially a priest or religious, either because he is not attached to another woman, or from vanity because he enjoys consideration, or because the generous character of his vocation allures; but if they love someone, love easily passes into vehement passion; d) ordinarily less depraved than men,

women become worse if they are corrupted, in which case they rage more and are much more dangerous.

2. Hence the first danger to be feared is excessive confidence toward women: they are not easily to be believed in their complaints and tears, but rather to be exhorted to patience; nor are they to be heard in those things which they say concerning others; nor must anything more be asked by them than can be publicly repeated; nor must response be made to insidious questions by which they strive to know our ideas, gestures, and especially weaknesses, chiefly facts which regard the clergy or a religious Order.

3. A graver danger is excessive or inordinate affection toward them. Rare are the women who do not furnish occasion for this; they are accustomed rather often, without depraved intention, sometimes also maliciously, to provoke it:

a) There are many who, by multiplying signs of kindness and tender attention, devote themselves to the priest; by these their affection is nourished and increased, and by these the priest does not always remain unmoved. But if he yields somewhat, a dangerous temptation easily arises as regards persons with whom he converses more frequently and more intimately, especially while beauty is present in those persons.

b) Others, led by a certain need to love and to be loved, deliberately seek to provoke the affection of the priest; toward these it will be opportune to use the greatest vigilance, and besides, as far as possible, to teach them to seek satisfaction of the aspiration either in a higher love toward Christ, or in legitimate conjugal union.

c) Finally others, shameless, intend the same from malice; these are known by lighter and excessively free acts to which they ordinarily have come because of imprudent concessions of the priest. These must be irrevocably refused, because for them the priest can now procure no good; whence let them seek another confessor for themselves, whom besides they will easily find.

Therefore, although there are certain more excellent women who, most distinguished in virtue, are raised even above men, nevertheless such strong women are very rare, and still rarer are those altogether safe, who furnish cause for no danger: for we are all fragile and can fear a fall. Hence neither age, nor virtue, nor the greatest perfection, nor the religious habit can be a legitimate reason for leaving behind severe cautions.

V. Manner of acting with women. - Therefore the confessor, especially a younger one, if he is considerate and prudent, cannot fail to fear that danger. This holy fear will be for him a guard. But he who fears danger will use the following means.

1. He who fears danger assiduously and fervently begs divine help, and, in exercising his ministry, often lifts his heart to God for preserving that tranquility of soul, indeed, as it were, insensibility and indifference never to be esteemed enough, lest toward a woman he conceive an affection which can be ruinous and so easily steals in, especially among the young.

2. He who fears danger guards the eyes, and never casts them upon penitents approaching or departing, nor considers them with fixed gaze. Some immediately know all penitents... blessed

are those who know none, unless perhaps someone had to speak to one outside the confessional: it will be a sign that he has excellently guarded heart and eyes.

3. He who fears danger does not use excessively familiar expressions or soft words which savor of sensual affection or arouse passion, but speaks to penitents modestly, seriously, and altogether reverently, even if they do not expect such observance, regarding in them only the image of Jesus Christ redeemed by His blood. Speech with women, says St. Bernard, should be (even in confession) rare, not too frequent; brief, namely concerning necessary matters, so that even in spiritual counsels brevity and simplicity are pursued; and austere, so that one always proceeds with fatherly gravity and altogether avoids expressions of excessive tenderness and levity.

4. He who fears danger has rectitude and great purity of intention, and severely closes the entrance of the heart to tender affections, even if they are provoked by excellent gifts of soul or singular virtues which shine in one or another; indeed toward such there is need of greater advertence, because the danger is of greater adhesion, and spiritual love is accustomed to transgress due limits: for sanctity, as experience has proved, rather often furnishes an occasion for hallucinations.

5. He who fears danger questions most purely in certain matters: content if he knows the species of the sin and its causes and occasions, he does not inquire curiously concerning the manner.

6. He who fears danger beware of every friendship and familiarity with women, and holds them, even if he hears them for several years, as strangers; he does not visit them at home, nor permit them to come to his home for the sake of speaking. For if he is younger, there is need of vigilance; if old, that he may be an example to others, nor even then is danger always absent.

By using these cautions he will be able to hear confessions without having to lament any fall in the exercise of the holy ministry, with the grace of God.

VI. Things especially to be avoided. - 1) Let him remember Ecclus. XLI, 15: "Have care for a good name," so that he not only be chaste, but take care to be held as such, far from every suspicion of a less pure conscience, after the example of Christ, who never suffered anything to be objected to Him against chastity. But if it is necessary outside confession to see his female penitents, let him act circumspectly, let him not sit alone with one alone in secret, touch the hand of no one, nor permit his own to be touched by any.

2. Let him beware besides lest he seem to bear it badly if penitents happen to turn aside to another confessor: for this proceeds from inordinate affection and can be an occasion of sacrilegious confession. Wherefore if the penitent manifests the desire of approaching another, let the priest congratulate her, unless perhaps he knows the confessor to be less suitable; in that case let him take care that she approach another to whom she is unknown. But if she herself has approached another, let the confessor not ask concerning the time at which she last confessed; in these things, namely, let him preserve total indifference.

3. When an unaccustomed penitent approaches, let him not show that he knows her; but if it happens once or another time, let him ask nothing; if, however, it were a question of a stable

change of confessor, the motives would have to be inquired into, for the sake of giving useful counsel.

4. Let the confessor beware of all partiality among various penitents.

5. In worldly persons, that they may be corrected, attention must be given to the sins proper to them, especially if they are, or think themselves to be, of better condition. "Certain women sacrifice a great part of the day to pride or vanity by arranging the body and painting the face; they stand at the door and frequent the church that they may see and be seen; they desire to be praised and honored; they envy praise and honor in others and detract from them; they follow luxury in clothing, bear the breast uncovered, love visits, lose time in playing and chatting..., turn morning into full day, neglect divine things, or wish to be present only at the last Mass. Their idol is comfort and the feminine world" (Reuter, *Neo-Confessarius*, n. 111). But if such women are married, they will watch more over vanity than over the domestic matter and offspring to be educated; to these the obligations of state are to be firmly expounded and means of amendment prescribed.

VII. Concerning widows Aertnijs notes, *Th. P.*, n. 143, q. 2: The confessor: "1. as far as lies in him, should give effort that they guard chastity. If the effort should be vain, let him impel them to second nuptials. 2. Let him exhort them to administer the family diligently, keep their children in duty, and preserve their authority entire. 3. Those who conduct themselves honorably and have decreed to abstain from second nuptials, let him confirm in their purpose; and therefore let him admonish them that they immediately refuse any suitor whatever, and beware all familiarity with the other sex, for otherwise the purpose would vanish shortly. 4. Let him turn rich matrons away from a life given to idleness, vanity, and delights; but let him excite them to performing works of piety and charity."

Question V: Concerning Abnormal Persons

I. Various pathological states. - Causes of nervous agitation, not rarely occurring in present times, which more or less impede human liberty and moral life, are pathological states or diseases of the mind, which are so called not because the soul or spiritual faculties can be sick in themselves, but because, on account of badly affected organs of the body, specifically centers of the brain and sensitive faculties, they are impeded in action, either transitorily or permanently. Now those who labor under such a morbid state are commonly called abnormal. These are distinguished according to diverse genera, according to their diverse illnesses, the principal of which are numbered here:[1]

[1] Theologians are accustomed to treat of these in the doctrine concerning human acts. We have taken the principal things from Vermeersch, Prummer, and Tanquerey; Salsmans also has excellent things in the work *Geneeskundige plichtenleer* and in the article *Abnormalen in den biechtstoel*, in *Pastor Bonus*, Aug. 1927. Besides, the following can be compared: P. Janet, *Les Obsessions et la Psychasthenie*, *Les Nevroses*, *Nevroses et idees fixes*; Dr. Raymond, *Nevroses et Psychasthenie*; Rauh and Revault, *Psychologie appliquee a la morale*; Ribot, *Les maladies de la volonte*; Grasset, *Demifous et demiresponsables*, *Psychisme inferieur*, *La responsabilite des criminels*; Axenfeld and Huchard, *Traite des Nevroses*; Pitres and Regis, *Les Obsessions et les Impulsions*; Van Velsen, *Hypnotisme, suggestion, psychotherapie*; Francotte, *La raison et la folie* (*Rev. des Q. scient.*, d. 27); Vigouroux, *Traite de medecine*, t. III; Dubois, *Les psychonevroses et leur traitement moral*; Pere Raymond, *Le guide des nerveux et des scrupuleux*; Eymieu, *Le gouvernement de soi-meme* (vol. 2); Surbled, *La morale dans ses rapports avec la medecine et l'hygiene*, t. III; Boule, *Questions de responsabilite* (*N. R. Theol.* 1910); D'Agnel and d'Espiney, *Direction de conscience et Psychotherapie des troubles nerveux*; Capellmann-Bergmann, *Pastoralmedezin* (Latin and French versions); Familler, *Pastoral-Psychiatrie*; Bessmer, *Storungen im Seelenleben*, *Die Grundlagen der Seelenstorungen*, *Seelische Hilfe bei Nervenleiden*, *Die Krankhaften Hemmnisse der Willensfreiheit* (in *Stimmen*); Schloss,

Propadeutik der Psychiatrie (French version); Huber, *Die Hemmnisse des Willensfreiheit*; Krieg, *Die Wissenschaft der speziellen Seelensorge*; Romer, *Psychiatrie und Seelesorge* (an excellent work although the author is Protestant); Weber, *Zwangsgedanken und Zwangszustande in pastoral-psychiatrischer Beurteilung*; Tummers, *De nieuwere richting in de strafwetenschap*; Van der Hoeven, *Psychiatrie* (where sometimes there are positivist conceptions); Roels, *De Psychologie van den wil*; Schimm Van der Loeff and Barnhoorn, *Zielsziekten en hunne verpleging*; Antonelli, *Medicina pastoralis*; Gemelli, *De scrupulis, psycho-pathologiae specimen*, etc., etc.

1. Phrenesis, in which the sick put forth false judgments that are radically incurable, because they are deceived by perpetual or temporary hallucinations, or have disturbed associations of imagination, so that their psychic life can be equated with the life of those dreaming. Hence in delirium (even if it is monomania, or hallucination circumscribed to one topic) they are not free; during intervals of delirium nothing of itself impedes liberty.

2. Obsession so occupies the mind that the obsessed person is bound to think or do certain things. It disturbs practical judgment sufficiently, so that more often room is left only for light fault, and mortal sin can scarcely be given in them. But, besides perpetual obsessions, there are others which are generated only in certain circumstances; whence outside the state of obsession, the sick are held by the precept of fleeing occasions of morbid excitation toward committing dishonorable things, and if they freely violate this, they are guilty.

To obsession are reduced phobias, fixed ideas, and more intense scruples.[2]

[2] Concerning remedies and education against obsession and phobias, cf. Prummer, *Th. M.*, I, n. 95; and Vermeersch, *Th. M.*, I, n. 85.

3. Blind impulses or invincible propensities can exist in a morbid state, whether they immediately obtain an act that is not deliberate, or overcome fruitless resistance, so that the act is nevertheless elicited. Hence some are merely mechanical or motor, which often are without affection, as, for example, in an idiot; others are psycho-mechanical or even merely psychic, which occur with more distinct perception and stronger affection, and often leave partial liberty.

All suppose a suggestible person, for his passive docility depends on the intensity of a certain phantasm which rather easily generates an insuperable motion. Thus some are known to be prone to lies, others to internal blasphemies, others to suicide or homicide, others to thefts, drunkennesses, or fires, according as they labor under kleptomania, dipsomania, pyromania. Yet with these must not be confused those who from habit are thieves, drunkards, liars, etc.; for these certainly are not abnormal, but sinners from malice.

It is not easily discerned whether the impulses are truly irresistible, but it must be judged from all circumstances whether liberty is only diminished or taken away. The latter can easily be supposed a) if the action cannot be explained by natural concupiscence, b) if after the evil action the soul has remained quiet and content, c) if something is done which one otherwise altogether abhors; yet liberty is not always taken away. Hence those things can be applied which are handed down in the Treatise on Human Acts concerning violence, fear, and concupiscence.

4. Abulia renders the will powerless to will efficaciously that which is desired, whether it remains idle, or, as if unwillingly, is compelled to seek or flee certain things against its practical

judgments. In the first case, the sick person is often excused from certain positive duties, because liberty is at least sufficiently diminished; in the second case, what has been said concerning impulses holds.

Abulia, however, is sometimes not universal, but limited to certain acts or certain times. Besides, it can be voluntary and free in the cause, when someone knowingly and freely has induced this state, e.g., by constantly abdicating the will without sufficient reason.

5. Neurasthenia is a pathological state consisting in habitual fatigue of the nervous system from an organic or psychic cause, in which the nerves appear weakened and exhausted, so that the agent, although master of himself, labors under the greatest inconstancy and is greatly depressed physically and morally. Wherefore liberty is diminished, though not taken away. Hence the sick can rather easily be excused when, yielding to weariness, they neglect certain positive precepts, especially merely ecclesiastical ones, as an excessive burden. Nevertheless, of themselves they are to be judged to sin if, because of sadness, they seek shameful delights to which the illness itself does not impel.

6. Hysteria, although its cause is disputed, also carries with itself disorder and disturbance of the nervous system, but much graver than neurasthenia. It consists in an immense morbid suggestibility, from which sensibility is diminished or for a time extinguished in certain parts of the body (anesthesia), while in others it is rendered much more intense (hyperesthesia); there also arise motions of the body more or less disordered, and also vivid hallucinations or vehement passions which are very unstable and greatly impede the free exercise of the will, as also right judgment and moral sense. Hence in practice, only from all circumstances, and from the declaration of hysterical persons themselves, can it be known how much liberty remains in them. Yet hysterical agitation (*crise, acces de grande hysterie*) cannot be combined with grave guilt.

7. Still graver is larvate or hidden epilepsy, which impels one to perpetrate various strange, shameful, atrocious things: to inflict injury, blasphemies, shameful conversations, striking, homicide, etc.; not indeed constantly, but with longer intervals interposed, without the sick person retaining memory of all these things. Epileptic agitation or crisis certainly cannot be combined with grave guilt. But outside times of frenzy the mind is sane and perfectly free; unless sometimes a transitory psychic disturbance comes upon it.[3]

[3] Speech is not instituted concerning hypnotism, because it is not an illness, but a phenomenon induced by an extrinsic cause.

All the aforesaid disturbances, even if they affect affection or the will, seem to draw their origin from an obscuring or diminution of intellectual cognition.

II. Conjectural signs of invincible inclination, by which it can more or less be discerned whether someone has yielded to an ineluctable inclination, are taken from various circumstances, especially taken together:

1. if on several occasions, and as if instinctively and swiftly after the manner of a mere instrument, he has placed some action, without any proper advantage, sensible delight, or satiation of a base instinct;

2. if he acted from a certain nervous anxiety or unrest which, when the action has been performed, immediately falls and becomes quiet; while on the contrary in a tranquil and quiet state he never acts thus;

3. if sincerely, and without any dissimulation, he wonders at his own operation, and spontaneously affirms himself conscious that he acted under the impulse of a certain violence;

4. finally, if he seems infected by hereditary blemish, by which, namely, his parents or blood-relatives also seem to labor under the same pathology.

Especially, in the matter of chastity and lust, there is sometimes given an abnormal propensity, as if invincible, toward sexual delight, namely sexual hyperesthesia or erotism, which according to the different sex is called satyriasis or nymphomania. Different species of this are numbered:[4]

[4] Concerning these, our *Questions concerning Chastity and Lust*, pp. 99-102, can be compared.

a) a most vehement propensity to procuring self-abuse, especially among certain young persons of either sex;

b) exhibitionism, or an inclination to display in public the sexual parts or operations, every shame having been left behind;

c) homosexuality or uranism, that is, a perverse inclination toward the same sex, and as it were insensibility toward the other sex;

d) sexual perversion, by which venereal delight is procured from those things which are not by nature fitted to procure it. This is manifested in sadism, by which they inflict violence and torments on others to procure sexual delight for themselves; in masochism, by which, on the contrary, with a view to the same delight, they wish to undergo violence and torments; in fetishism, by which lust is excited by the sight or imagination of indifferent things (hair, shoes, cloths, etc.) which the mind conceives as associated with sexual things. In healing this, it is necessary to break apart that association and, as far as possible, erase it from memory.

III. As regards imputability and responsibility, the Determinists and Criminalists are not to be heard, who hold almost all malefactors as irresponsible sick persons, nor many physicians or cultivators of Psychiatry, who too easily deny the liberty and imputability of actions. But on the contrary, the better among them affirm not only that liberty generally is not extinguished, but also that the greatest influence is exercised by the soul upon the body, notwithstanding the latter's native propensity; and therefore in curing mental illnesses they are accustomed to use suggestion or moral persuasion, and indeed acknowledge the beneficial influence of the priest. Besides, for the greater part men are healthy, not abnormal; the latter constitute an exception.

Hence for practice let it be noted:

1. abnormal persons remain perfectly free in relation to other matters in which they are not abnormal;

2. in those matters about which they labor under abnormal affection, liberty and imputability are often attenuated and diminished, yet not in such a way that what is mortal always becomes

venial;

3. generally, however, liberty is not extinguished; wherefore this is not to be supposed, but on the contrary sufficient liberty is presumed to be present;

4. even if liberty is greatly diminished or extinguished, this can be, and rather often is, voluntary in the cause: for the more conscious they are of invincible propensity, the more they are bound to flee occasions and circumstances of morbid excitation by which they are carried to dishonorable things;

5. in the case in which responsibility is greatly diminished or almost extinguished, this is not to be said to penitents, because it would increase their concupiscence and induce them to more rash acts, so that now, without any rein or restraint, they would rush into vice: namely, despairing of resisting, they would think that all things are now permitted to them.

Wherefore confessors judge imprudently who immediately from a few indications conclude to grave abnormality, and much more who therefore conclude to inculpability and excuse; they act still more imprudently if, for the sake of consolation, they reveal this to such penitents.

And thus especially in the matter of chastity, in relation to those who have an extraordinary erotic constitution (whether native, or adventitious from readings, spectacles, disordered loves), by which they are assiduously pressed by the lust of untamed flesh, so that the smallest spark produces a great fire which is accustomed to be extinguished only when passion has been fulfilled; they are filled with thoughts and phantasms and are agitated by vehement temptations of the flesh, and finally break forth into the deed. Such persons:

a) generally and of themselves cannot be excused, especially if they have come to the deed; nor even, if their responsibility is doubtful, can the aforesaid commotions and actions be permitted to them under the pretext that probably they are not formal sins: for it is not licit to expose oneself to the proximate danger of consent, even doubtful consent, but formal sin must certainly be avoided. This is, namely, a case in which systems of probability cannot be applied, but the safer way is to be chosen;

b) hence, as often as they at least have broken forth into the deed, they are rather to be presumed guilty, and then regularly they should not be permitted to approach holy communion without previous confession;

c) besides, unless they diligently use all natural and supernatural means, they are not capable of living chastely;

d) whence let the confessor pity them and help them with fatherly solicitude and great patience; therefore let him give courage to them for fighting, urge them to flee diligently all dangers of chastity, to pray frequently and renew a good purpose of resistance, to frequent the sacraments, to mortification in food, drink, and sleep, and also to use other physical means or certain medicines.

e) generally let him be kind toward them in conceding absolution, even if they are recidivists, because of their intrinsic fragility; yet if they were also in occasions, they would have to be treated more rigorously because of their proclivity to pleasures.

IV. As regards care and medical treatment, it must be noted: those who are abnormal in an acute degree are simply to be committed to a trustworthy and Catholic psychiatrist physician; for others the confessor can contribute to healing by rational persuasion and suggestion, so that, namely, obsessions, fixed ideas, and harmful impressions may gradually be diminished and erased from the mind. For this, divine help having often been invoked,

1. let him excite the confidence of the penitent: for it is necessary that the latter wish to be healed and understand that this must be procured by his docile submission and education of the will;

2. let him proceed with great kindness and at the same time inflexible firmness;

3. let him seek indirect means by which he may little by little turn the mind of the penitent away from harmful things and fill it with healthy ideas and good affections. Thus, for example, let him act so that the abnormal egoism of the hysterical person may be wiped away; for this let him also counsel honorable distractions and delights, prohibit excessive exercises of mortification, and prescribe works of mercy and charity toward the neighbor.

V. Observation concerning hysterical persons. - Since the confessor must also hear hysterical persons of either sex, he must be fortified against the dangers and harms to which he is thereby exposed.

For this it will be useful to know the distinctive signs, or the stigmata of hysteria. These symptoms are almost infinite and always variable, so that in hysteria nothing seems constant except its inconstancy. But we hand down the principal signs to which the others are reduced.

A. Physiologically, hysteria is a mental illness which is manifested in a threefold phase: the first is the sensation of a little globe ascending from the belly to the throat, where it produces the sense of a certain constriction; the second is a nervous crisis with cries and destitution of the senses; the third is anesthesia or even partial paralysis.

B. Psychologically, however, the distinctive character, says Cardinal Mercier (*Psychologie*, n. 233), is mental incapacity for synthetic coordination, and therefore perpetual mobility of soul and abnormal inconstancy. "A certain marvelous change of affections of joy and sadness even to anxiety, irritability, fear, love, hatred, whose causes are in no way understood, renders these sick persons most troublesome to all who must deal with them." Thus the physician Capellmann, *Medicina pastoralis*, on the fifth precept, appendix concerning hysteria; and Prummer, *Th. Mor.*, I, n. 96: "The hysterical person now exults with jubilation of mind, afterward because of futile reasons is saddened even to death; today with great confidence she approaches the confessor or physician and most faithfully observes their commands; tomorrow she complains about the confessor and physician as men without heart and intelligence." From this:

1. Under the respect of sensation, perceptions are increased and exaggerated beyond measure in such a way that they also produce hallucinations. "Small impulses upon the sensible nerves," says Capellmann (l. c.), "move them to most vehement complaints concerning bitter pains; phantasy proposes images to them and brings them into a state which is very similar to ecstasy and somnambulism. Not rarely, under a simulated fervor of religion, lustful excitement, growing even to nymphomania, is concealed rather skillfully, so that those standing around,

indeed the physicians themselves and younger clerics, are deceived in a pitiable manner." On the contrary, the illness can sometimes be so aggravated that a person otherwise modest casts away all shame and openly tempts others to immodesty.

2. Under the respect of association, images and representations are so vivid that they are held as reality. From this follows a defect of truth and truthfulness, and as it were an appetite of lying. "This defect manifests itself both in actions and in words. The hysterical person deceives herself, deceives others, although she does not always do this knowingly or from malice. Hence in her are sometimes found actions which, considered at first sight, appear miraculous, e.g., heavenly visions, diabolical apparitions, fasting protracted for several weeks (but secretly she eats), indeed also bloody stigmata in the hands, feet, and side. Not rarely also the hysterical person narrates filthy lies concerning the matters and deeds of others, indeed most wickedly blackens the honor of the confessor" (Prummer, l. c.).

3. Under the respect of affection, there is exaggerated egoism, or an immense propensity of ordering all things to oneself, so that all may attend to oneself. "In very many of these sick persons there arises an untamed desire of moving mercy and pity, of acquiring esteem for themselves and of turning the eyes of all to themselves" (Capellmann, l. c.); from which is born a demand for emotions and for intense life with the risk of dangers. "The hysterical person is accustomed to refer all things to herself. Wherefore she continually laments that other men do not consider her enough or offend her by manifold and actually futile things. From this she also tries that others may pity her. She feels great satisfaction if other men acknowledge or admire her pains, anxieties, labors. But if others seem to neglect her, then with all her strength, even by exaggerations and lies, she obtrudes herself and her state. She does not care for the neighbor except because of egoism. Hence also she often offends the neighbor, not indeed by grave deeds, but as if by needle-strokes, so that those cohabiting or often conversing with her must tolerate many inconveniences. In one word: the hysterical person, whatever she does, whatever she suffers, refers all things to her own honor or utility or satisfaction" (Prummer, l. c.).

From these things it is easily understood how greatly the cleric must beware of hysterical persons, Capellmann wisely admonishes (l. c.), "lest he be deceived by things sometimes very strange, and lest he be deceived by fraud from those sick persons who are very cunning and truly obstinate in pursuing the things which they have proposed to themselves. These sick persons, that they may satisfy their desire of deceiving, refuse neither pain, nor labor, nor troubles of whatever kind. Since perverse thoughts and frauds, whether known by the sick as such or not known, very often regard fervor of religion and piety, there is rather often given to a cleric, and especially to a younger one, an occasion that he truly be wearied by these sick persons, and often know late that he would better never have given work to them." Indeed, since they are liars, not rarely they falsely accuse others concerning lust committed with them; for this reason a priest outside confession should not speak alone with one alone, so that he cannot be calumniously accused.

It should be noted, however, that in hysteria, especially in a hysterical paroxysm, anyone very rarely dies; wherefore the priest, as regards administration of the sacraments, if a person whom he knows to be hysterical is laboring under a more intense crisis, must be cautious.

VI. Warning. - From the fact that in the civil forum certain persons are absolved from crime, one must not conclude to the absence of all imputability and guilt. Human law does not punish except those who are certainly proved guilty by external signs; besides, several crimes are not commonly punished unless they are committed by men of sound mind, of which sort certainly are not those who labor under psychological illness. Yet in the forum of conscience they can nevertheless be guilty.

Question VI: Concerning the Sick and the Dying

I. Concerning the Sacrament of Penance to be ministered to the dying. - Concerning ordinary dying persons nothing special occurs that must be said; only those are to be considered who cannot speak and at least apparently are deprived of their senses. These, in this way, are excused from the material integrity of confession; but they can be deficient in contrition or in its sensible manifestation, and in the essence of confession, which nevertheless are the proximate matter of the sacrament or the condition without which there is no absolution.

Concerning these the principle holds: they are to be absolved absolutely if they certainly are disposed, and have manifested that disposition in some way; conditionally, as often as it is somehow, even slightly, probable that absolution will profit them.

For the sacraments are for men, and in extremities extreme things are to be attempted; hence in a case of necessity it is licit to use doubtful matter and to expose the sacrament to the danger of nullity, provided some probability, even slight, is present of a valid absolution useful to the recipient. - Yet mere possibility does not suffice, since in practical matters probability, not mere possibility, is attended to; otherwise all would have to be rebaptized, and all priests reordained, because it is strictly possible that Baptism or Order was conferred invalidly.

In other words: the law of religion is that a sacrament cannot be exposed to the danger of nullity; the law of charity obliges one in a case of necessity to assist one's neighbor. But charity obliges more than religion. Hence in a case of extreme necessity, the law of religion ceases while the law of charity remains. For it is better to expose the sacrament to the danger of nullity, provided that it is in some way probable that it can be valid, than to leave a man exposed to the danger of eternal damnation.

Hence 1) a dying person is to be absolved absolutely: a) if he has in the present certain sufficient signs of contrition; or b) if, at the moment of absolution, wholly deprived of his senses, he now gives no signs, but previously gave certain signs to the priest himself; indeed c) if before witnesses he asked for the sacrament or for a priest and meanwhile lost speech and the use of reason. For in these cases there is contrition virtually remaining, and a sufficient confession made at least by means of an interpreter; and so great a necessity most certainly excuses from the material integrity of confession.

2. A dying person who gives no sign of penance and has not explicitly given one is to be absolved conditionally: a) if he lived as a Christian; or b) if he preserved the faith. For such persons can deservedly be presumed to wish to die as Christians, and besides to have elicited an act of contrition before they lost the use of reason, or even then to elicit it through some lucid interval and perhaps to exhibit a sensible sign through sighs or movements of the eyes or lips or other things of this sort, although the priest does not distinctly perceive it. Hence they can be absolved, yet under condition, because contrition is not certain, but only some probability of contrition. Such are reckoned those who have preserved signs of the Catholic faith, e.g.,

medals, a rosary, a scapular; and unknown persons are equated with these if they probably are Catholics, because they have lived in a Catholic region. Indeed c) a Catholic dying person who in the very act of sin, e.g., in drunkenness, adultery, or a duel, lost the use of reason, according to some can probably be absolved in this way, provided from his life there is some probability of contrition, insofar as at the moment when he perceived that he was losing the use of reason, he perhaps changed his mind and detested the sin.

3. In no way is he to be absolved who, after a life impiously spent, before he was deprived of the use of reason, positively refused out of contempt, unless such a manner of acting can be judged to have been revoked by some sign of contrition; for then every probability of conversion is lacking. For although, under the influence of an outstanding grace, he certainly could have been converted, this is altogether improbable, as being supported by no solid reason.

4. In the same manner as Catholics, schismatics deprived of their senses, who are in good faith, can be absolved under condition, scandal having been removed, S. Off. 20 July 1898 and 17 May 1916.

5. Likewise heretics who are in good faith, and at the same time admit the sacrament of Penance; not, however, if they reject it, because the intention of receiving it is lacking to them.[1] And although they have the will of saving themselves, nevertheless they do not have the will of receiving the sacrament and confessing, or of saving themselves through such a means. Perhaps they would wish to confess if they knew the sacrament of Penance to be a necessary means of salvation; but now they do not will it.

[1] Certain persons conclude by parity as for schismatics, and argue from the alleged decree of the Holy Office, 17 May 1916. But the decree speaks of schismatics, not of heretics; and the parity is not present, because schismatics admit the sacrament of Penance, but heretics generally do not.

When it is not licit to minister the sacrament to schismatics or heretics, the priest should take care that they elicit acts of faith, hope, charity, and perfect contrition.

It should be noted in the aforesaid cases that it is always expedient for the priest, before he imparts absolution, to address the dying person and excite him to contrition. For experience proves that there are dying persons who are able to hear, although they cannot speak or give certain signs; in which case they too are helped in this way toward contrition.

II. Practical corollaries. - 1) If concerning the value of the Baptism of non-Catholics there is a probable doubt, they must secretly be baptized under condition before they are absolved.

2. In a positive doubt whether someone is a pagan, a heretic, or a Catholic, he can be absolved under condition.

3. Those who are certainly dead cannot be absolved, nor anointed, even under condition; but from recent experiments it is established that life can remain for some time in the body, even when someone seems to have given the last breath, because generally life recedes from the body only successively. Hence certain persons who were apparently dead, e.g., suffocated, or rescued from water or fire, have been restored to life after three hours by rhythmic traction of the tongue. Therefore, the other conditions being posited, those can be absolved and anointed

who by such a process give certain signs of life, at least sensitive life; indeed, under condition, those who, although they seem dead according to ordinary signs, are prudently judged to survive. Yet the complete cessation of the motion of the heart, lasting for some time, and invading corruption of the body, or putrefaction already begun, are deservedly held as certain signs of death; cadaveric rigidity is less certain.

In practice, when a certain sign of death is lacking, if here and now the judgment of a physician cannot be had:

a) in a case of wholly sudden death, generally they can be absolved within two or three hours, because then it is probable that life remains for some time because of the resistant vital powers, which are not immediately destroyed; not longer, because it is no longer probable, even if it is possible in an extraordinary case that life remains hidden even for some days. An exception is made if death was violent, e.g., from compression or tearing away of principal members, because then death is evident.

b) In a case of ordinary death from a long-lasting and gradually wasting disease, they cannot be absolved, because it is not probable that life remains.

c) In an intermediate case of death, from a long-lasting disease but with a sudden new influence, which is called a "complication" and greatly accelerates the expected death, they seem able to be absolved for a space of about half an hour after apparent death.

4. The condition to be added is this: if you are capable, but not that one: if you are disposed. For since it is probable that one contrition, namely sincere but not appreciatively supreme, is required for the capacity and validity of receiving absolution, and another, namely appreciatively supreme, for the disposition required that it produce fruit, grace, and therefore that the sacrament can revive: the formula if you are disposed, in a case in which the disposition were absent, would render the sacrament altogether null and would forever impede its reviviscence. On the contrary, the form if you are capable would leave the sacrament valid in a case in which that lesser contrition was present which would suffice as a part of the sacrament, while that greater contrition was not present which is required as a disposition for justification; whence, when the dying person disposes himself by greater contrition, the sacrament would revive and the penitent would obtain the effect of grace. And in this sense Cajetan, in his little work on confession, St. Antoninus, and the old Thomists, such as Capreolus and Paludanus, interpret St. Thomas, *Supplement*, q. 9, a. 1.

With greater reason the same must be said of Extreme Unction, because it is certain that disposition, namely contrition, is required only for the fruit, not for the essence and validity, but for this latter the intention alone of receiving the sacrament suffices.[2]

[2] Concerning the sacraments not to be ministered under the condition if you are disposed, we wrote an article in the periodical *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, Nov. 1909, which quite generally received the approval of experts. Nevertheless Fr. Castillon moved certain difficulties in *Nouv. Revue Theol.*, May 1910, which we subjected to examination and to which we gave satisfaction in *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, July 1910. No further response succeeded this.

5. In a case of extreme necessity, the shortest form is to be employed: I absolve you from all censures and sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

6. But how many times can a dying person be absolved? If he is in possession of himself, as often as he makes a brief confession or manifests signs of sorrow anew and wishes to receive absolution. If he is deprived of the senses, as often as there is a probable reason of a more certain disposition or of a new necessity; to do this without a special reason twice or three times in a day, or with a space of three or four hours intervening, as certain persons say, does not seem to be admitted, because there is not a sufficient reason for so easily exposing the sacrament to the danger of nullity.

III. Concerning Extreme Unction. - Extreme Unction is not to be given to all Christians who are in danger of death, but to adults dangerously sick; for, besides Baptism, there is required for its validity that one be a) a sinner and therefore an adult, or have the use of reason; b) dangerously sick; c) intending to receive the sacrament. Therefore the following cannot receive the sacrament:

1. The insane, unless previously they had the use of reason and then formed the intention of receiving Extreme Unction.

2. The healthy, even if they are in extrinsic danger of death, as those condemned to death; those about to navigate or fight dangerously, unless after they have received a lethal wound; women who regularly give birth with some danger of death, unless death is to be feared on account of a special infirmity, or their strength has already been greatly weakened from childbirth; and those about to undergo a dangerous incision, unless from an illness already contracted they are in danger of death. - On the contrary, those can be anointed for whom, from illness, there is not only imminent but also probable intrinsic danger of death, as all who have contracted an infirmity that will probably bring death, those infected by poison, the gravely wounded, those who after surgical incision are greatly weakened, indeed also decrepit old persons even if they labor under no special disease, for old age itself is for them an incurable disease, can. 940, § 1.

3. Those who do not intend to receive the sacrament; but an actual or virtual intention is not required, but a habitual intention, not retracted, even implicit, suffices, such as the intention of Catholics not to die without the sacraments, or of dying as a Catholic; not, however, the simple intention of saving oneself. Hence:

a) Of itself and regularly Extreme Unction is to be given to all the sick to whom absolution is granted, even if they are deprived of the senses. The reason is that it is a more secure means of salvation than absolution itself, for it is certain that Extreme Unction remits mortal sins, Jas. V, 15, and it is also certain that it is valid if absolution certainly valid cannot be had. For when sufficient external signs of contrition are lacking and therefore absolution is very doubtful, Extreme Unction is received validly, because contrition, which is a part of the sacrament of Penance, is not a part of Extreme Unction required for its validity, but only a disposition for its fruitfulness.

b) Accidentally, however, it can happen that Extreme Unction must be denied, when it cannot be given without the scandal of those standing by to some impious man already deprived of the senses, to whom absolution was granted secretly; likewise to him who now appears dead. Scandal can often be prevented by secretly administering one anointing, or even by admonishing those standing by; but if this cannot be done, the sacrament is to be denied, because the spiritual evil of many prevails over the conjectural good of one.

c) In doubt whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, whether he is actually placed in danger of death, or whether he is dead, the sacrament is to be ministered under condition, can. 941.

d) Extreme Unction is to be ministered absolutely to all, even sinners, who in life had an intention, not retracted, of dying as Catholics, can. 943; under condition, if you are capable, if it concerns unknown persons, or those who do not certainly live, as was already said, or sinners so impious that it can be doubted whether they have the intention of dying as Catholics; but not to those who, impenitent, contumaciously persevere in manifest mortal sin, can. 942.

e) In a case of necessity, Extreme Unction is to be ministered by one anointing only on the forehead, with the form: Through this holy anointing may the Lord pardon you whatever you have sinned. Amen. But if death has not followed, the other anointings are to be added as indicated in the ritual, and indeed absolutely, not under condition. The anointing on the loins is now to be omitted; the anointing of the feet can be omitted for any reasonable cause, can. 947.

IV. Concerning Viaticum. - To those deprived of the senses Viaticum A) is to be denied: 1. to sinners, even ordinary and hidden sinners, unless they have given certain signs of penance; 2. likewise to those whose disposition is unknown; 3. to the insane and the half-witted, unless previously they had at least the implicit intention of communicating. The general reason is that on the one hand the Sacrament is not necessary, and on the other hand reverence toward so great a Sacrament must be set before the conjectural utility of the faithful.

B) On the contrary it is to be granted to those who certainly are in the state of grace, provided nevertheless that every danger of irreverence toward the Sacrament is absent, which can arise from those who are furious, or who are going to vomit the Sacrament, or who are not able to swallow it. In a case of vomiting, Holy Communion is not to be given unless vomiting has ceased for several hours; a physician should be consulted, otherwise an experiment can be tried by giving a very little bread, and, if the sick person retains it for a sufficiently long time, a consecrated particle can also be given. But if a grave doubt remains, that great Sacrament, since it is not necessary, is rather to be denied than exposed to such irreverence.

It should be noted, however, that coughing is not to be confused with vomiting, because sputum does not come from the stomach; hence from coughing there is no danger for the sacrament, unless it is assiduous.

But if there is doubt concerning the capacity of swallowing, by way of experiment something liquid is administered to the sick person, and if this can be swallowed, the sacred Host or at least a particle can be conferred on him in a small quantity of water or wine by means of a spoon.

Moreover, even outside the danger of death, so that sick persons can swallow the host or particles adhering to the mouth, after the host there can be given an ablution of water or wine, although this is swallowed before the host; for the violation of the fast at least morally does not precede communion, indeed the law of fasting prescribes only that nothing be taken before the reception of the Sacrament, and this is fulfilled.

V. Cases. - In the article of death certain cases can occur which present a special difficulty, and which, unless they have been examined beforehand, could not be solved rightly.

1. It often happens that a priest is called to a dying public sinner. In this case the sacraments are not to be ministered to him publicly, especially Viaticum, unless the scandal is publicly repaired; but if this is impossible, it can be brought secretly. And indeed:

a) regularly for ordinary sinners the public bringing of the Eucharist itself is a sufficient retraction or sign that they repent;

b) for great sinners a declaration is to be made by retraction before witnesses;

c) but for those who live in a proximate occasion, e.g., in publicly known concubinage, the occasion must first be removed; but if this is impossible, or if extreme necessity is urgent, absolution and Extreme Unction can be given secretly after a promise of removing the scandal; and communion is to be brought secretly, after a promise before witnesses of removing the scandal as soon as possible.

In a case of concubinage or civil marriage let it be examined whether marriage is not to be contracted for legitimating offspring or for fulfilling a promise; in which case the confessor should know that the Ordinary can dispense from all impediments of ecclesiastical law, excepting presbyterate and affinity in the direct line, can. 1043, and, if time is lacking to have recourse to the Ordinary, the parish priest or the priest himself can also do this, can. 1044.

2. It can also happen that a woman or girl illegitimately pregnant, with no one knowing this, is in imminent danger of death. Now after the fourth month of pregnancy has begun, there is a founded hope of extracting the living fetus from the uterus of the dead mother. Hence the woman has a grave obligation to disclose the matter directly to some person, so that after her death a Caesarean operation can be performed and the infant baptized. She can accomplish this:

a) by writing letters in which she declares that she wishes the womb to be opened after death and the offspring to be baptized, which letters, signed and closed, she should hand over to a trustworthy person to be opened only after death. For thus, as far as can be done, provision is made both for her own good name and for the salvation of the offspring.

b) If she is unable or unwilling to write, let her manifest the matter by word of mouth to an entirely discreet person who will reveal the fact only after her death.

c) Other things being equal, for a duty of this sort the physician is to be chosen before others, who perhaps already knows the matter under professional secrecy, who can more suitably provide for the good name of the mother and family, and who, when necessity is urgent, can proceed at once to the section and Baptism; parents are less suitable, for perhaps through excessive fear of infamy they will abstain from revelation.

d) The confessor himself should take upon himself the burden of revealing only with difficulty and in the last place, especially if he fears that from this the sacrament may be rendered odious to the girl's relatives.[3]

[3] De Smet notes, *de Sacr. in gen. Bapt. et Confir.*, p. 257, note 3: "It will perhaps be better if the girl permits that, already before death, the physician or midwife be admonished most cautiously and under gravest secrecy, so that, when death supervenes, they may be ready at hand for the operation. It also seems good that, if it can be done, besides a suitable external person, also the father or mother be admonished by the girl herself, lest afterward they contradict the operation to be performed." We doubt, however, that these things will always be opportune.

But the confessor should induce the penitent to this by persuading and commending, not impose it as obligatory if he experiences that the penitent certainly refuses it; for then he would uselessly disturb good faith, which in fact would not profit the infant and would harm the salvation of the mother. If, however, she doubts and asks concerning the obligation, the confessor must confess the obligation.

To a girl who is sick from the pregnancy itself the sacraments can be brought secretly, in order to preserve her good name.

3. The dying person can also be an impious man who by work or writing has attacked the faith. Concerning this case, if there is time, the Ordinary should first be consulted. But such a sick person is to be admonished concerning the obligation of removing scandal and retracting errors; for this end let him declare, by himself or through the confessor, before witnesses, that he retracts all errors condemned by the Church and professes Catholic doctrine whole and entire; or let him sign a formula of retraction; or at least let him consent before witnesses that the confessor publish his retraction. But if the scandal perseveres, it is to be removed insofar as possible, e.g., writings are to be removed from circulation, or a written retraction is to be published for reading.

But he who has given his name to a Masonic sect must besides abjure the sect, and, if possible and if time permits, give up Masonic insignia and writings, and manifest to the Ordinary the names of leaders, if he knows any.

It should be noted, however, that one excommunicated can be absolved from all censures in danger of death by anyone.

4. Sometimes a dying person is bound to restitution or to reparation of damage; in this case:

a) if he is found in good faith, and no time remains for prudently admonishing him concerning his obligation, or it is foreseen that the admonition will not profit, this being omitted, he is to be absolved;

b) if fruit is hoped for, or if the penitent is not in good faith, e.g., if he doubts, then he is to be admonished and helped at once toward restitution, for if this can then be fulfilled, it does not suffice to transfer this burden to the heirs, to whom trust is not easily to be given;

c) if restitution cannot be made at once and the obligation is hidden, let him commit the money to the confessor, or rather to another faithful man, so that it may be secretly sent back to the creditor. But if he does not have the money, let him leave that sum to the creditor himself in the testament, omitting mention of restitution; or he can also add a codicil by which he orders the heirs to give a sum to a trustworthy person to be expended according to the will of the sick person; or if a notary could not conveniently be had, in regions or circumstances where his office is required, let him declare by word or writing that he has left a note with a third person for notifying what he wishes to be done after death, and that he wishes this to have the force of a testament;

d) if the obligation is not hidden, nor can it be fulfilled at once, let the confessor procure that restitution certainly be made through the heirs, whether by a note to be handed to the creditor, etc.

If the obligation of restoring is doubtful, as can happen in the administration of goods, let the sick person take care that, the matter having been examined, his own be given to each.

But if reputation is to be restored, let him do it in the better manner in which he can, by word, or by writing to be published if necessary, or by a retraction before witnesses who can attest publicly. But the best restitution of reputation is made through a third person of great authority.

5. How should the priest act if, arriving with Viaticum to a hidden sinner and hearing his confession, he finds him indisposed?

Haine, *Th. M.* III, de Euch. q. 43, responds:

The priest a) "should strive altogether to dispose him;

b) If he certainly remains indisposed, because, for example, he does not wish to leave the proximate occasion, or does not wish to promise grave and certainly owed restitution, it is not licit to absolve him.

c) As regards communion, he is earnestly to be induced, after confession has been completed, to declare publicly that he no longer wishes to receive the Eucharist.

d) If he refuses to declare this and wishes to communicate, the Eucharist is to be ministered to him, although indisposed, lest the seal of confession be violated."

To avoid this danger, it will be better that in hospitals or clinical houses the priest, or the sister appointed for caring for the sick, not prepare all things for ministering Holy Communion on his or her own motion, but only after the sick person, having confessed, asks for it; but when the priest is asked, let him uniformly say: ask the penitent whether he wishes to communicate.

VI. Observations. - 1) To the dying to whom the sacraments are ministered, the general absolution according to can. 468 is also to be granted by any priest: "To any priest who assists the sick there belongs the faculty of granting to them the Apostolic Blessing with plenary indulgence in the article of death, according to the form handed down by approved liturgical books, which blessing he should not omit to impart."

Therefore under the name of general absolution comes the plenary indulgence which the Roman Pontiff imparts to the dying, by himself or by delegates, under the form of a blessing; and under this aspect it is altogether distinguished from the plenary indulgence which, without any blessing, those can gain in the article of death who possess a blessed or pious object, e.g., a cross or plaque, to which an apostolic indulgence is attached, or members of a confraternity to which such a privilege has been granted.

General absolution can be granted to all placed in grave danger, even from a cause other than illness, but the indulgence remains suspended and does not attain its effect except in the true and physical article of death. And therefore it neither ought nor can be repeated, nor given under several titles, in the same illness however long-lasting, since this would be altogether useless, even if afterward the dying person fell into a new mortal sin; - but it is to be repeated only if the sick person recovers and afterward falls into a new danger, S. C. Indulgences, 24 Sept. 1838; 12 March 1855; 12 Feb. 1842.

The conditions required in the sick person for gaining it, from the bull of Benedict XIV *Pia mater*, 5 Apr. 1747, are: a) that he not be excommunicated or manifestly impenitent; but if he is doubtfully disposed, let the apostolic blessing be granted as often as absolution or Extreme Unction is given, even only under condition;

b) that he has received the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, if he can; but if he cannot, the state of grace suffices while he gives forth his supreme breath;

c) that he offer himself prepared to accept whatever shall please God, and to undergo death itself patiently in satisfaction for the punishments which he has merited by sinning;

d) that he devoutly invoke the most holy Name of Jesus by mouth if he can, otherwise in heart; and elicit an act of sorrow and charity.

2. Commonly it is not expedient to hear the confession of a public sinner unless he has promised amendment and due satisfaction, for if he is unwilling to obey the commands of the confessor, the latter, blocked by the seal, will be held to minister Viaticum to an unworthy person. He will avoid this inconvenience if he does not admit to confession except one who is prepared.

3. Viaticum, Extreme Unction, and the apostolic blessing are to be administered to children, provided they have sufficient discretion.

4. Although a dying person, Noldin notes, *Th. M.* III, n. 459, is to be absolved before the administration of Extreme Unction, because Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the living and the complement of the sacrament of Penance, and because the Church so prescribes, nevertheless this is not required by so great a necessity that it would not be licit to anoint a dying person before absolution, where it is deservedly feared that time for both sacraments may fail.

5. Sacraments ministered to sinners deprived of the senses, who gave no signs of contrition, are not a title to ecclesiastical burial.

VII. Concerning the manner of helping the dying.[4] - Certainly no work of charity is more acceptable to God than to help the sick and the dying toward a holy death; wherefore one of the principal priestly duties is to have care of the sick. This principally regards the parish priest, who, says the Ritual, tit. 5, c. 4, n. 1, "as soon as he knows that any one of the faithful committed to his care is sick, will not wait until he is called to him; but of his own accord he should go to him, and this not only once, but often, insofar as there is need; and let him exhort his parishioners to inform him when anyone in his parish happens to be sick, especially if the illness should be graver." But, St. Alphonsus adds, care of the sick is not the duty of parish priests only, but the work of all confessors.

[4] Cf. St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, nn. 105-107 and 227-280; Reuter, o. c., nn. 209-227; Billuart, de Poen., diss. 6, art. 10, § 7; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 187-203; Theol. Mechl., de Poen. (4), n. 74, pp. 218-219; Berardi, *Pr. conf.*, nn. 772-791; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1854-1855; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 645-658; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 292-295; Tanquerey, de Poenit., nn. 557-559.

For rightly exercising this duty authors are accustomed to hand down various admonitions, to be applied not invariably but according to opportunity; the principal of these we set down here. First:

A. General counsels: 1) "Let the priest approach the sick person," says the Ritual, ib. n. 7, "so prepared that he may have at hand arguments fitted for persuading; and especially examples of the Saints, which have very great force, by which he may console him in the Lord, excite and refresh him." - Therefore a) let him trust in divine help and pray to Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the guardian angel for the sick person whom he visits, and whom he will not convince unless the grace of God so counsels as to persuade; b) and that he may help better, let him, as far as he can, explore the sick person's disposition, manners, and condition, on the way or in the house of the sick person, e.g., whether he is an educated and prudent man, uses his senses, has asked for a confessor, is believed to be near death, whether he has already confessed, whether he has made a testament, what kind of life he has led, whether there is something of some moment concerning which it is necessary to admonish him, whether he desires another confessor, etc.; c) then let him premeditate the manner of acting with the sick person, turning over in his mind what things are to be said and done.

2. If relatives are foreseen as not easily going to admit the priest, a) let him take care, at least by indirect means and the intervention of friends, that he be called as a friend; b) but if he has attempted this in vain, with all prudence let him ask that at least for the sake of courtesy he may be able to visit the sick person; c) and if he knows that his ministry is desired by the sick person, let him press more urgently and personally plead the cause of the sick person in the better way; d) if he cannot approach the sick person without witnesses who are unwilling to withdraw, let him not urge an entire confession, being content with a general accusation only or with that of a lighter fault; this being posited, having first excited the sick person to contrition, let him absolve him; - but if he cannot approach him at all, what would prevent him, in an extreme case, from addressing him with a loud voice through the door or window and inducing him to contrition and absolving him under condition?

But once admitted and having entered the room, let him kindly greet the sick person, with a great affection of charity and compassion inquire concerning the disease, pains, inconveniences, rest, etc., bring consolation and exhort him to patience, especially by the example of Christ suffering.

B. Specially as regards the sacrament of Penance. 1. Before confession: If he was not called by the sick person for confession and the danger of death is not imminent, let him not at once speak of it, especially if the sick person fears to undertake it, but a) first let him strive to conciliate his mind to himself, by setting forth the mercy of God and His benefits and paternal care, and Christ's love toward sinners; b) on the second or third visitation, let him propose the utility of confession for quiet of mind, and at the same time show that it is not difficult and does not require much time, that the sacrament can contribute to bearing the illness fruitfully, indeed to obtaining health; and then let him exhort the sick person to wish to confess at once; c) if he asks for some delay to prepare himself, this can be granted, e.g., one or another hour, unless danger stands in the way; but care must be taken that it not be deferred longer; d) but if he cannot be brought to confessing, let the confessor carefully explore the cause: if it is difficulty of the work, let him explain that the difficulty is exaggerated and promise every help and ease; - if it is lack of confidence or even despair, with every effort let him raise him to hope and confidence, recalling to mind the Passion of Christ, the parables of the prodigal son or the lost sheep, the examples of David, Peter, Magdalene, the good thief, etc.; - if finally it is hardness of heart, to these let him add the unhappiness of the impenitent sinner, the rigor of divine judgment, the eternity of punishments, and the happiness and peace of conscience of him who

returns to God. Nor should he ever despair, but let him solicit the exhortations of other priests or upright persons, especially the physician, together with private and public prayers for obtaining grace for the salvation of the bedridden person; e) but if the sick person is now prepared for confession, let him inquire from what time he has confessed, exhort him to perfect sincerity, and kindly ask whether he has doubts or anxieties concerning past confessions, since now there is the best opportunity of correcting all defects.

2. In confession a) of itself: he ought to question, but sparingly, so that, avoiding excessive and indiscreet questions, he takes care that the sick person not have to speak much, being more solicitous concerning contrition than concerning procuring material integrity; nevertheless it will often be opportune to ask concerning four things: concerning a sin never accused, concerning hatred, concerning a depraved custom formerly had and never expiated by general confession, and concerning restitution or reparation to be made. The accusation having been heard, let him excite confidence by recalling Christ's mercy toward sinners in words and examples; immediately before absolution let him ask whether the sick person has anything that disturbs his mind; let him briefly propose to him motives of contrition and help him in eliciting acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, and impose a lighter satisfaction;

b) accidentally, if restitution, satisfaction, or reconciliation is to be made, or scandal repaired, let the confessor smooth the way and at once indicate or apply efficacious means according to the manner in which we spoke above, n. V.

3. After confession: a) if there is certain danger of death, for knowing which he will be able, by himself or through another, secretly to ask the physician, let him exhort the sick person to dispose of his affairs opportunely, for the peace of the family and the relief of conscience; b) likewise to prepare himself for receiving Viaticum with great desire and Extreme Unction; c) secretly let him tell the household to ask the sick person whether he does not desire another confessor, and add that this will not be displeasing to him.

C. When agony is imminent. 1. "When the disease grows heavier," says the Ritual, "a) the parish priest, likewise the confessor, will visit the sick person more frequently, and will not cease diligently to help him toward salvation; and, when danger is imminent, he will admonish him that he be called immediately, so that he may be present in time for the dying person." By these words the obligation of helping those in agony more diligently is proclaimed; the gravity of this obligation depends on the different condition of the dying person. For if he has lived as a Christian and is surrounded by pious persons, the presence of the priest will be most useful, but by no means necessary; but if he has led a vicious life and remains subject to grave temptations, much more if up to this point he has not received the last sacraments, the parish priest, or even the confessor, is held under grave obligation to attempt all things for procuring his salvation, or procuring it more certainly. He will accomplish this last by helping with prayers, exhortations, and especially by repeated absolution, after confession has been at least very briefly renewed, or even by Holy Communion.

b) But if he is legitimately impeded, let him commit the office to another priest, and exhort pious persons from the neighborhood to visit the dying person and bring help for dying well.

c) Let him take care, as far as he can, that in the room of the sick person all things be ordered and clean, even among the poorer; and especially that profound silence be preserved there and that they speak only in a subdued voice, and only concerning those things which edify and refresh the sick person; nor should just anyone be admitted to conversation, but only those by whose company the sick person is relieved. Let this person be ordered to be wholly occupied in the business of the soul, and not to admit profane conversations; let too frequent visits of parents, children, wife, and especially the sight of those persons from whom temptation could arise, be kept away. Near the sick person let holy water be placed, and in his sight a Crucifix and image of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. When death approaches: a) let him timely admonish the sick person concerning the imminent danger of death, not importunately but cautiously, so that he announces it more obscurely at first, then openly, gently nevertheless, and at the same time suggesting pious affections;

b) by name let him inspire in the sick person, but with few words, and only at intervals, acts of faith, hope, charity, especially perfect contrition, conformity to the divine will and acceptance of death, and other brief ejaculatory prayers, according to the circumstances, e.g., "O my Jesus, mercy! Thy will be done!"

c) let him often offer the Crucifix and image of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be kissed;

d) let him take care that the sick person gain all the indulgences he can, especially the plenary indulgence in the article of death which the apostolic blessing has attached to itself;

e) hence let him admonish him to invoke the names of Jesus and Mary once or more often, by mouth if he can, otherwise in heart;

f) let him frequently sprinkle him with holy water, especially if he is vexed by diabolical temptations; frequently also let him fortify him with the sign of the cross and bless him.

3. When the time of expiration is now imminent, let the priest, or in his absence a pious person, with knees bent recite the prayers of the dying and the commendation of the soul, "Go forth...," admonishing those assisting to pray at the same time for the dying person; let him hand the dying person a blessed candle that he may hold it, to signify that he dies in the holy faith. He himself or another will suggest to the one in agony, and often repeat aloud to his ears, brief aspirations: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit" - "Holy Mary, my mother, help me in the hour of death" - "Jesus, Mary, Joseph..." - etc.

4. After death. - Let the priest beware lest he say prematurely that the sick person is dead. Yet, as soon as there is now moral certainty concerning death, let him exhort those standing around to pray with him for the departed, e.g., "Come to his assistance...," or a decade of the rosary, or the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then let him sprinkle the dead person with holy water; afterward let him console the relatives, speaking confidently and from the heart concerning the great mercy of God and eternal happiness; and to those standing around, according to opportunity and circumstances, let him inculcate that prayers will profit the departed more than tears; let him call back to their memory the brevity of life, the vanity of the world, the happiness of those who die well, and on this occasion excite them to a truly Christian life. All these things in very few words, but from the heart.

VIII. As regards the temptations of the dying, since they are accustomed to be attacked by various temptations, the confessor must fortify them against these. And indeed:

1. He must remove impediments to salvation; hence a) let bad companions and proximate occasions of sinning be removed, such as dangerous images or persons complicit in sin; on the contrary, let pious images of the Crucified and the Blessed Virgin Mary be hung before the sick, by which they may be helped in pious thoughts concerning God and eternal life;

b) if love of life presents an impediment, let there be proposed the great merit of death accepted for God's sake, the great misery and calamity of the present life together with the joy of the future life, and the counsel of divine goodness which cuts off life for us when this conduces most to our salvation;

c) if the obstacle comes from love of relatives, let it be said that God will receive into the guardianship of His paternal providence the spouse, children, family, and all affairs of him who subjects his own will to the divine will and from it freely accepts death;

d) if care of temporal things renders him anxious, the sick person is to be exhorted not only to dispose of all things in good time, but also, if he is endowed with goods of fortune, to provide for his own soul and take care that Masses be celebrated and alms be given, yet without the priest exciting any suspicion of cupidity or stirring up the hatred of the family against himself.

2. The confessor must guard against temptations: if the sick person experiences temptations

a) against faith, let him not discuss these, but turn the mind elsewhere and frequently profess the faith with simple affection, repeating: I believe whatever God has revealed, whatever the Church teaches. I believe, O Lord, but help my unbelief;

b) if against hope, let him recall to mind words or examples of Scripture which show that God is ready to pardon; that He does not will the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live; that He sent His Son Christ, who said: "I came not to call the just but sinners"; that He at once pardoned the publican saying, Be merciful to me a sinner; that He promised paradise to the thief hanging on the cross, etc.;

c) if against charity toward the neighbor, so that he has hatred for a determined person, let him think again upon the words of the Lord's prayer, by which he may know that he who does not forgive cannot hope for pardon from God; - that he himself has inflicted greater injuries on God; - and that Christ hanging on the cross prayed for those crucifying Him, and for us, while we were enemies, gave His life;

d) if against patience, let these three things be inculcated: it is necessary to suffer, both because we are men, whose common lot is that pains cannot be avoided, and because we are Christians, to whom it is fitting to bear the cross just as Christ, who was innocent, suffered most bitter pains in soul and in body for us sinners; - it is just to suffer, because as sinners we have risen up against God, whom it is fitting to compel to be subjected again by adversities, and because by sinning we have merited to suffer more than the pains of this life; - it is most useful to suffer; for if pains are borne impatiently, they are increased and remain fruitless; but if patiently, for God's sake: they purge the affection while they draw it away from earthly and illicit things and lift it up to heavenly things; - they blot out sins

by offering an obvious and opportune reparation, kinder than the punishment of Purgatory; - they merit glory by a new merit, for "the momentary and light tribulation of ours works in us an eternal weight of glory," II Cor. IV, 17. Therefore it is glorious to God to have sons who gladly accept from His hand whatever things He sends, and to us it will be glorious in eternity; but to bear impatiently adversities sent by God Himself is harmful to the soul, dangerous, and most unbecoming.

3. The confessor must minister every assistance; first

a) the sacraments; wherefore it will be opportune that, after a renewed petition for pardon and contrition, he impart absolution anew several times and invite him again to Holy Communion; but if it should happen that the sick person falls into mortal sin, let him instill confidence in him, suggest contrition, and absolve him at once;

b) let him propose brief ejaculatory prayers and pious affections toward God to be repeated rather often, and remove earthly matters, having no conversation about children, wife, goods;

c) let him suggest acts of the virtues in few words: of faith, hope, charity, contrition, desire of eternal life, conformity to the will of God, forgiveness, acceptance of death: "this is necessary; we are not greater than Christ and the Blessed Virgin; it procures happiness and frees us from the valley of tears!" etc., without bringing annoyance by longer exhortations;

d) let him offer images of the Crucified or of the Blessed Virgin to be kissed, and suggest that the most holy names of Jesus and Mary be invoked by mouth or at least by heart;

e) let him impose the scapular and procure a blessed rosary, and take care that the sick person gain indulgences according to his strength, especially the plenary indulgence in the article of death.

Question VII: Concerning the Incarcerated and Those Condemned to Death

I. Manner of acting with those condemned to death. - Until the recent war we thought, in our Belgium, that the ministry toward those condemned to death no longer pertained to our times; but harsh reality dispelled the error! Therefore, since circumstances could again bring similar cases with themselves, the confessor must know how he ought to conduct himself with those to be punished capitally. Concerning this matter it is pleasing to transcribe especially the excellent admonitions of St. Alphonsus.[1]

[1] *Praxis Conf.*, nn. 108-109. - Cf. Reuter, o. c., nn. 242-243; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, n. 119.

A. "With these the greatest charity and patience must be employed.

1. The first time that the confessor visits the guilty man, let him begin to signify to him that this death is a gift of God, who wills to save him. Let him say that we all are going to depart from this world, and shortly, that we may arrive at eternity, which has no end.

2. Hence let him speak to him concerning the happy life of the Blessed, and concerning the misery of the damned.

3. Then let him exhort him to give thanks to God, who has waited for him until that time, and has not permitted him to die at a time when he was in sin.

4. Finally let him induce him to accept death with a cheerful soul, joining it with the death which Christ the Lord suffered out of His love.

5. And let him comfort him by saying that he, by accepting death for his sins, is certainly saved, and saved with great merit, whence in heaven he will be rewarded with a great prize.

6. Afterward let him suggest to him that he confess, and freely manifest all his sins. Especially let him ask whether he is held by hatred against anyone, for example against the judge or the opposing party, etc.; but after he has absolved him, let him take care that he communicate several times, admonishing him also that he frequently commend himself to the Mother of God, that she may obtain for him a good death."

These things having been accomplished, if the punishment is imminent, all others having been removed, the condemned man is to be addressed only concerning those things which regard the soul; - on the night immediately preceding death he is to be persuaded to sleep, lest on the next day he be indisposed; - when the day of death dawns, he is to be animated to consecrate this day of greatest merit to God, and to intend to unite the punishment to be suffered to the Passion of Christ.

B. While the guilty man goes from prison to the scaffold, the confessor

1. "should say to him: Come, my son, follow Jesus Christ, who before you went forth to Calvary, to undergo for you a death far more bitter than yours."

2. On the way let him not press the guilty man to advance, but accommodate himself to him; let him order him to guard his eyes and, greeting no one, to keep them lowered, or fixed on the Crucifix, and he himself should pray continually with him.

3. "When they have arrived at the place of punishment, let him again reconcile him, and absolve him... and afterward say: Come, N., be of cheerful soul, now you remain in the grace of God; now the gate of Paradise is open to you; there Jesus and Mary await you. Join your death with the death of Jesus, who for love of you died bloodless among mockeries and tortures. Do you love Him? Say with me: Lord, above all things I love Thee; I wish to die, that I may do Thy will. I accept death for my sins. I hope now that Thou hast spared me; again it grieves me that I offended Thee. I desire to come quickly to heaven, to kiss Thy feet, and to love Thee in eternity.

4. While... he ascends the ladder, let him say to him: My son, invoke the Mother of God, that she may assist you. Offer your death for your faults. Protest that you do not wish to consent to any temptation of the devil.

5. While the sentence is to be committed to execution, let him say: Behold Jesus Christ, who with arms outstretched awaits you that He may embrace you; Lord, I have offended Thee, it displeases me; now I love Thee with my whole heart. God of my soul, Thou callest me; behold, now I come. Virgin Mary, help me. Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Jesus, Mary, Joseph!"

C. But if the guilty man obstinately refuses to confess, what is to be done?

1. "Let the confessor seek to help him by prayers, first of all by the Sacrifice of the Mass, and take care that he also be commended to God by others, and especially by religious communities, that they may assist him by Masses and prayers.

2. Let him announce to the condemned man that, whether he is converted or not, the sentence will be executed.

3. Let him ask whether perhaps he despairs of his salvation..., whether he pursues someone with hatred, from which his obstinacy proceeds, from pride, unbelief, hatred, despair, etc., so that he may discover the manner by which he may aptly persuade him.

4. Moreover let him advert, in the first times in which he addresses such an obstinate man, not to compel him importunately to confess at once, since he will become more obstinate. It will be better to speak with him concerning death, to which we all are bound, concerning the mercy of God, concerning the punishments of hell and the joys of paradise. Let him also narrate the example of some sinner who died impenitent; or of some person condemned to death who obtained a holy death... These things having been said, let the confessor leave the guilty man, that he may turn these things over in his own mind.

5. Afterward let him again inquire whether perhaps he has changed, and say to him: My son, now your death approaches; what do you decide? It is in your power to choose hell or heaven. Consider that if you depart, you will repent through all eternity, but no further remedy will be available for so great an evil.

6. When he still sees him hard, let him take care that those standing around pray for him; and especially recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin; and then let him kneel before him and beg him not to wish to perish. If he does not profit even by addressing him, let him turn himself to addressing the Crucifix," namely, that He not permit a soul redeemed by His precious blood to perish.

7. Finally, if the time of punishment has now arrived... "it will also be able to profit to terrify him by saying: Depart, accursed, into hell [the printed text has: Discere maledicte in infernum], since you wish to lose yourself. But know that your punishment in hell will be more bitter by the memory of this time which God grants you, and which you abuse. But afterward let him resume gentle speech.

8. If ever the condemned man has already ascended the ladder and asks to confess, let him demand of the ministers of justice that they permit it... - This, however, runs for him who has not yet confessed; for if the guilty man has already confessed at other times, then let the confessor admonish him to elicit an act of contrition, and then question him thus: Come, my son, now do you not intend to confess to me all your sins, and especially those which you told me? And when the guilty man has assented, let him impose on him a very light satisfaction, e.g., that he invoke Jesus and Mary, and absolve him."

II. Observation. - If the person condemned to death is truly innocent, as can more easily happen among political offenders, or among those who, in a case of war, are condemned by military justice by

the enemy, not on account of a crime of common law, he will rather easily be able to be brought to a holy death, indeed even a heroic one, offered and accepted for the noble cause of the fatherland, or for a just ideal cause, or even for God and the extension of His kingdom. Many noble examples of this were given by our fellow citizens during the recent war.

III. Manner of acting with the incarcerated. - Captivity is accustomed to precede condemnation. - Now, as regards the incarcerated, various cautions to be employed by the confessor are enumerated.[2]

[2] Concerning these and the following matters, see Reuter, *Neo-Conf.*, n. 242, and Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 117-118.

1. Let the confessor first take care that he has jurisdiction for all reserved cases, if there are any, and for the more frequent reserved censures.

2. It is not expedient, on account of the danger of insincerity, that he admit captives to confession before the judicial instruction has been brought to its conclusion, unless they have already acknowledged their offense before the judge.

3. But that they may act with him more confidently, and not falsely say that they are innocent, nor conceal their sins, let him instruct them that those things which they do with him in the forum of conscience cannot be manifested to anyone, and therefore that, whether guilty or innocent, this will neither harm nor profit them.

4. Let him also beware lest he easily give faith to their sayings which do not pertain to confession, nor rashly publish those things which he has received outside confession.

5. If they proclaim themselves innocent, complaining of injury done to them, let him not easily believe them, nor nevertheless immediately contradict them, but dispose them to patience and resignation.

6. Let him never promise or undertake to plead for them before the magistrate, but let him care for the soul alone. Nor, without certain knowledge, let him cause hope of a milder punishment to shine upon them, because if the hope falls, sadness increases more.

7. Finally, without the permission of the prison officials, it does not seem opportune either to give little gifts to captives, or to offer money providing for their necessities.

IV. The manner of acting with the guilty should be the following:

1. Let the confessor strive to conciliate their souls, both by words signifying an affection of compassion, and, if he can, by alms; then let him attempt little by little to bring them to veneration and submission toward the providence of God, to patience, and to contrition, so that they may desire to be reconciled to God in the sacrament of Penance. That he may attain these things, and that he may console them, let him go to them often, if he can.

2. Since men of this sort are for the most part rude in the business of religion, it is necessary to question them concerning the principal truths of faith and concerning the chief Christian duties, and, if there is need, to instruct them by the living voice or even by a book

proportioned to their capacity, yet without prolonging the conversation too much and generating weariness.

3. In confession, let him exhort the guilty man in few words to open his sins candidly without any fear, and to trust certainly that God pardons all sins to one sincerely confessing and sorrowing. Let him not importunately urge him to confess crimes before the judge before he has been convicted in judgment. Specially let him examine whether the guilty man pursues no one with hatred, whether he is not obliged to repeat some confession of his past life or even to institute a general confession. And above all let him be attentive to obtaining true sorrow and firm purpose.

4. If the guilty man has been condemned to long imprisonment, let the confessor propose various exhortations to him that he tolerate captivity with a strong soul, that he accept the punishment from God as from a just judge, that he admit temporal affliction and thus spare his soul in eternity, that he be conformed to Christ innocently suffering. Care must also be taken that the captive always be usefully occupied, according to his capacity, by working, praying, reading, etc.

V. Observation. - At Easter time or on the occasion of spiritual exercises, when many of the detained approach the sacraments, it is not always possible to refuse the confession of those whose case is still under judgment. Then it will be especially opportune, as we already noted, n. III, 3, to insist upon the full independence which the confessor enjoys toward the judicial power, with which he is bound by no bond, and upon the strict obligation by which he is held of preserving the sacramental seal.

Chapter III: Concerning Various Penitents According to the Condition of Soul

Question I: Concerning the Pious and Devout

I. The obligation of the confessor to direct penitents in the way of Christian virtue and perfection. - The confessor ought not only to tear vices out of his penitents, but also to insert virtues in them; he is bound not only to take care that penitents return to the grace of God and that the just persevere in the same, but also that these advance in virtue and sanctity, and this as the minister of Christ, who came that they may have life and have it more abundantly, John X, 10. "It is a work very acceptable to God," says St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, n. 121, "to adorn brides for Him, namely to cultivate spiritual souls, that they may give and hand themselves over wholly to Him. Hence when the confessor sees a penitent living immune from mortal faults, he ought to employ every care that he introduce him into the life of perfection and divine love."

Since, therefore, everywhere there are not a few penitents to be directed who can tend to spiritual perfection, it is necessary that the confessor also be versed, theoretically and practically, in ascetical theology, or even mystical theology; or, applying himself to the study of it, that he be found at least not altogether a stranger in this matter. For this let him implore divine light by prayer and read spiritual books of sound character.[1]

[1] The following can usefully be consulted: St. Alphonsus, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 99-101, 121-125, 145-171, 217-226; Reuter, *Neo-conf.*, nn. 245-253; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1841-1842; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 215-244; Tanquerey, de Poen., nn. 548-556; *Precis de Theologie ascetique et mystique*; Theol. Mechl., de Poen. (4), n. 65, pp. 192-194; de Virt., nn. 88-90, pp. 220-223; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 15, § 5; Berardi, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 1136-1138; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 633-638; and other treatises on spiritual or ascetical life, several of which are indicated on p. 126, note 2.

II. General principles of direction. - That the confessor may truly consult the spiritual utility of these penitents, let him place before his eyes these general principles as rules of government. He must namely take care of three things:

1. Before all things let him take care both to present to them a right idea of sanctity, which does not consist in long prayers and particular devotions, or in long delay in church, or in sensible piety, nor in fasts and austerities, external works, spiritual consolations, or extraordinary visions, but in a right intention and a life conformed to the will of God, and in a prompt and generous will of doing all things for God; and to excite and foster in them a great and constant desire of perfection, indeed of the greatest perfection, at which even they are not going to arrive, and a firm purpose of reaching it, "representing to them the merit which God has that He be loved, and the gratitude which we owe to Jesus Christ, who loved us even to dying for us; and also the danger in which all souls are placed who, called by God to a more perfect life, resist Him."[2]

[2] St. Alphonsus, o. c., n. 121.

The intention of the end, because it is the principle in things to be done, is naturally fitted to exercise the greatest influence on our whole activity. Hence it is necessary that we set before ourselves a lofty

end of perfection, and indeed constantly; by this it will happen that we order all acts and the whole life to it, having been made indifferent to all the rest, and judging whatever does not conduct to it as lost.

2. Let him take care that all are not led in the same way: namely, let him not attempt to lead all pious persons living in the world to the highest degree of perfection. For there are those who, having obtained a good disposition, decline from evil and do ordinary good things, but do not seem capable of higher perfection. And there are others who are not truly devout, but whose devotion is illusion or hypocrisy; hence let him carefully separate the truly pious from the falsely devout. - Nor let him direct all in the same way or spirit, but let him attend to their condition, natural disposition, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

a) To condition: the married and the unmarried, seculars and religious, those who are held by assiduous labor and those who enjoy much leisure, are not to be governed in the same manner; for nothing is to be counseled which could obstruct the fulfillment of the duties of state.

b) To natural disposition: for those who are furnished with different temperaments must be treated differently.[3] Sanguine persons, prone to loves and pleasures, are to be restrained, lest they be moved by inordinate affection, or, moved by a sudden ardor, assume something above their strength and afterward, cast down, fall into desperation; and they are to be induced to accomplish all things deliberately and constantly. Choleric persons, by nature bold and spirited, but at the same time impatient and proud, are to be checked lest they exceed and wish suddenly to reach a higher grade and afterward fall; hence they are to be humbled, though with discretion, and admonished to distrust themselves, and yet at the same time to turn passions to a good end and direct them to nobler and higher things in the service of God. Phlegmatic persons, inclined to tepidity and pusillanimity, are to be excited more and constantly lest, lulled to sleep, they become tepid and lax; but on the contrary, that they proceed strongly in all things, yet in such a way that works are somewhat tempered, so that, considering their inborn inertia and languor, they are able to exercise them. Finally melancholic persons, inclined to sadness and suspicion, are to be treated more kindly and consoled, lest they be oppressed by sadness and a broken spirit and be driven into dejection; they are to be turned away from solitude and idleness, and occupied with useful labors, but not subjected to a heavier burden.

[3] See already above, p. 65, note 2.

c) To the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which the confessor ought to investigate and follow, not anticipate, lest by his own counsels he overturn the work of God. The Holy Spirit is manifold in gifts and leads souls in various ways by various inspirations. Hence one must not strive higher than God calls, nor hold back from that to which He impels.

3. Let him take care that they proceed in perfection in an ordered way and by degrees, beginning from smaller and easier things. Therefore let them be taught

a) to beware of the least deliberate defect, yet in such a way that, when a light fault has been admitted, they not be cast down in spirit, but immediately rise from the fall by acts of humility, sorrow, and purpose, even if they should fall a hundred times in a day;

b) to perform ordinary actions, and prayers, meditations or readings, hearing of Mass, use of the Sacraments, small mortifications, conversation with the neighbor, duties of state, precepts of God and of the Church, common devotions, e.g., visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and the rosary of the Blessed Virgin, etc., well and with every solicitude, and to have a right intention in all things, but to avoid extraordinary things;

c) to bear light things before they desire grave things;

d) first to strive for patience, and only then for joy in adversities;

e) first to mortify curiosity, vanity, and sensual love; then to exercise the moral virtues, especially prudence, rectitude and sincerity, fortitude, meekness, etc.; finally to walk more in the spirit of faith, filial confidence toward God, and fervent love of Him;

f) yet before all things to foster humility, obedience, and love of the cross together with one's own abjection: for if spiritual exercises do not conduce to this end, let devotion be held suspect.

III. The means of advancing in the pious and devout life are some general and common, others particular.

The particular means are diverse according to the different grade which the pious have reached, and according to the inclination of grace, their condition, and their disposition; so that especially those virtues are inculcated to them which are opposed to the predominant vice, or better correspond to the duties of state or the motions of grace.

The general means common to all are spiritual exercises, namely the practice of mental prayer, frequent remembrance of the divine presence, mortification, and discussion of conscience. To these external means can be added: the direction of the confessor together with reading of books which treat of the spiritual life, a definite rule or good ordering of life, reception of the sacraments, and sanctification of the social relations which we have with others.

IV. Mental prayer, although it is not necessary for salvation, is nevertheless the most apt means for sanctifying the soul by divine love; for, as St. Alphonsus testifies, *Pr. conf.*, n. 122, "prayer and sin cannot dwell together; but the soul will either leave prayer or sin," cf. Eccli. VIII, 40; Jer. XII, 11. Hence let the confessor induce the pious into the habit of mental prayer, establish for them the time to be spent on this exercise, e.g., half an hour morning and evening, assign to them the truths to be meditated upon, teach them the method of meditating fruitfully, and sometimes, e.g., each month, require an account of this method. - And let him watch that they pass no day without some consideration of truths, that they frequently pour forth pious affections and fervent ejaculatory prayers, and, as far as they can, read attentively and piously in a spiritual book.

Now mental prayer consists of three parts: preparation, meditation, and conclusion.

1. Preparation is contained in three acts, to be elicited briefly: namely an act of faith concerning the presence of God, an act of humility on account of sins committed, and an act of supplication for divine light.

2. Meditation or reconsideration itself, which ordinarily, and always by beginners, is to be instituted from a spiritual book, and concerning matter which seems more profitable to each one, namely with a greater affection of devotion, fruit of virtue, and utility in avoiding defects,

such as the last things, the goodness or benefits of God, the malice of sin, and before the rest the life and Passion of Christ. - Moreover the principal part and end of meditation is not the speculative consideration itself of truths by the intellect, but rather is in eliciting affections, making petitions, and strengthening purposes through the appetitive faculties: the meditation itself ought to tend to these fruits and ought to be left behind for their sake when a man perceives himself to be moved in soul. Hence:

a) Affections constitute the fitting response by which the soul addresses God after God has illuminated it and intimately addressed it. In view of various circumstances, acts of faith, confidence, gratitude, adoration, praise, humility, contrition, and especially charity are to be elicited, by which the soul offers itself wholly to God and conforms itself to His holy will, and which it cannot exercise repeatedly enough. Thus it should wish, affectively and effectively, to be led by God and to be submitted to Him.

b) It is helpful to repeat petitions in prayer: for God is not accustomed to grant helps except to those asking, and no time is more opportune for asking than the time of mental prayer. Therefore in this, with humility and confidence, let light, remission of sin, perseverance, etc., be asked for, first of all the gift of holy love; yet all through the merits and Passion of Christ.

c) Purpose is necessary so that the fruit of prayer may endure and the light granted by God may be applied to the directing of life. But purpose, that it may be efficacious, should not be general, e.g., of avoiding any defect whatever or giving oneself wholly to God, but concretely determined and particular, e.g., of avoiding such a defect in such a manner or on such an occasion, of better exercising some virtue by this special means, of tolerating such an annoyance, of obeying such a superior or such a rule, of mortifying oneself in such a thing and at this moment, etc.

3. The conclusion is completed by three acts: a) thanksgiving for the lights received in meditation; b) determination of standing firmly by the purposes formed, and of immediately executing them; and of remembering them rather often during the day, just as the sentence which more strongly moved the soul; c) urgent petition from God for help, to be obtained through Christ and Mary, for executing the purposes.[4]

[4] Garrigou-Lagrange, *L'Oraison commune*, in the periodical *La Vie spirituelle*, t. VIII, can also be compared.

V. Frequent remembrance of the divine presence, from which we several times offer our acts to God, break forth into pious ejaculatory prayers, renew the supernatural intention rather often, and thus avoid sins because of fear and reverence toward God present, and from love of Him advance daily in the practice of virtue, according to that: Walk before me and be perfect, Gen. XVII, 1.

It is namely a frequent and habitual elevation of mind and heart into God present, a loving attention of the soul to God, whom it beholds in every thing, in every event, and especially in itself; a simple gaze, but full of love, directed toward God, by which the soul, without any force or more intense effort, but as if by a connatural tendency, is borne into God, whom it knows to be present. Thus the soul is vividly conscious of the presence of God; it feels itself under His eye, searching all things, and under His operative activity; and rather often it recollects itself within itself for finding God in an act of loving sweetness.

For God truly is: 1) in all things by essence, presence, and power, that He may have care for all, especially for those who invoke Him with confidence, for the Lord is near to all who invoke Him;

2. in all events, because all are ruled by His wise providence, and they are not judged rightly unless they are considered according to the intention of the first cause;

3. specifically in the soul of the just: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come to them and remain with them, that they may have divine life and rejoice in the joy of the divine presence and love, John XIV, 23.

Remembrance of the divine presence contributes much:

a) to avoiding sin, from fear and reverence toward the supreme and infinite majesty present;

b) to advancing in virtue and spiritual life, from the fact that we sustain the struggle and effort while our God sees and, as it were, applauds;

c) to stimulating confidence and charity toward God, who from mere benevolence toward us, with His knowledge, wisdom, love, counsel, and omnipotence is in us for our good;

d) to supernatural consolation and spiritual joy of fruition concerning the presence of God and His highest goodness.

For this exercise in practice it helps:[5] 1) to carry some special sign or have it within one's room; 2) often to elevate the mind and heart to God present everywhere, or even inhabiting the soul, and to repeat an act of love, yet without any force or desire of sensible consolation: for he who truly loves never forgets the person loved; 3) to love solitude and seek it as far as possible, for enjoying the presence of God and His love; 4) and to ask this love and the memory of His presence from God. "Every evil," says St. Teresa, "comes from this, that we do not consider God present... Let us not think that even a single lifting of the eyes in remembrance of Him is left unrewarded by God."

[5] St. Alphonsus, o. c., n. 168.

VI. Mortification, in the present order, is altogether necessary for removing the impediments of perfection, specifically[6] a) for the progressive healing of the wounds of original sin; b) for the destruction of personal sin and its consequences; c) for the perfect subordination of natural activity to the life of grace, Gal. V, 24. For it is necessary that we live not only as rational beings, under the guidance of reason, but also as sons of God, under the guidance of faith and the Holy Spirit; and therefore it is necessary to restrain merely natural activity and even to repress the first inordinate movements, lest this natural activity grow too much and distract us, to the detriment of the higher activity of grace. But the impediments of perfection to be removed are internal and external; the internal arise either from inordinate internal senses or from unmortified passions; the external are from riches, honor and glory, delightful things, or persons loved too much or pleasurably.

[6] Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange in the journal *Vie Spirituelle*, t. XI and XII.

In this matter, however, the confessor must proceed moderately according to Christian prudence, by which he should beware of every excess and defect. For just as it is a harmful error to place perfection in fasts, vigils, hair-shirts, scourgings, etc., so it is the greatest error to contemn mortification as useless to spiritual progress, or absolutely to assert that external mortifications profit nothing or

little.[7] For although internal mortifications of the passions and appetites of the soul are rather to be exercised, such as: not responding to injuries, yielding in contentions, following the will of others, not seeking oneself, etc., nevertheless external and bodily mortifications help the internal ones and are necessary for restraining the senses; hence they were also frequent among all the Saints.

[7] St. Alphonsus, o. c., n. 145.

Yet let the confessor take care 1) that he not be too facile in conceding them, especially in the first warmth of devotion; and let him enjoin on the penitent that he do none except according to the prescriptions handed down to him;

2. nor generally let him concede them unless asked; for they do not profit unless they are much desired; hence let him so instruct penitents that they spontaneously ask for them;

3. let him concede less than they ask;

4. let him concede by degrees, so that he tempers the excessive fervor of beginners, to whom he permits only a few things; let him be more liberal with those who are well rooted in virtue;

5. let him concede according to strength, capacities, conditions, and circumstances of health, duties, and the fervor of each one;

6. let him concede according to choice: a) especially let him persuade to mortification of gluttony, which is less usually attended to and is harder than others, and yet is most useful; b) let him be sparing in conceding mortification in necessary sleep, which weakens the body and renders it unfit for exercises of piety; c) let him watch that they be exercised constantly in negative mortifications, as being more useful, e.g., that they abstain from curious things to be looked at, heard, or read, speak sparingly, be content with foods unpleasant to them, take nothing outside the time of refreshment, not approach the fire in winter, rejoice over the lack of some necessary thing, not complain about inconveniences, infirmities, persecutions, and command their passions;

7. yet let him add, that he may remove every occasion of pride, that those mortifications are altogether nothing if they are compared with those which the Saints did, or with the pains which Christ suffered.

Therefore the following are to be mortified:

1. The external senses, by constant custody: touch by circumspection in use, or even by afflictive penances; - taste by means of temperance, abstinence, fasting; - speech by vigilance, by which words are weighed before they are uttered, and by silence, by which we do not speak unless it is fitting; - sight by custody and modesty of the eyes, especially toward persons of the different sex; - hearing by turning away from evil speech against modesty, the neighbor, superiors; - smell by abstaining from perfumes and by enduring foul odor, especially if charity toward the poor or the sick demands it.

2. Inordinate passions, which give origin to the capital vices and all arise from inordinate love of self;[8] these are to be restrained and weakened, though they can never be fully extinguished.

Here three things are to be noted:

[8] Cf. St. Thomas, I-II, q. 77, a. 5.

a) first of all the predominant passion by which we more frequently fall into defects is to be investigated and fought;

b) the first motions of passion are to be repressed, lest they grow so much that they can scarcely be overcome;

c) not only a notable passion, but the least passion and every appetite for a licit but unnecessary thing is to be mortified.

3. The appetite for external causes which impede perfection: a) the appetite for riches by poverty of spirit and perfect indifference toward them; b) the appetite for honor and glory, which is sought even from good works, by weighing one's own nothingness and our absolute dependence on God, so that all things are gifts of God and from ourselves we have nothing except nothingness and sin; - by referring all works to the glory of God; - by concealing one's own gifts and not speaking about oneself; c) love of delightful things or of persons: by never acting for delight;[9] by mortifying affection toward relatives and dealings with them and care concerning their affairs; by avoiding every merely natural friendship, especially one founded in tender and sensible love which draws its origin from gifts of body or disposition alone.

[9] Let this be understood in the manner in which it is usually explained in the treatise on Human Acts.

VII. Discussion of conscience. - Necessary to mortification and progress is sincere daily discussion of conscience, both for watching over affections and operations, lest self-love overturn the right intention in them, and for experiencing whether in the way of virtue progress or regression is being made, and finally for detecting the causes and occasions of defect and inconstancy, that we may avoid them. It includes both general and particular examination: general, for recalling the principal offenses; particular, concerning one vice or one virtue in species, for seeing not only whether we have offended, but also whether and how far we have advanced. For progress will be more prompt and safer if all powers are applied to one thing, either a vice to be extirpated or a virtue to be cultivated, than if, with many things aimed at simultaneously, the powers are divided into different ways.

For instituting this examination usefully: a) for a determined time a virtue to be exercised or a vice or passion to be extirpated is undertaken, and indeed in a determined manner and in determined circumstances, e.g., the more useful virtue or the dominant passion; b) in the morning the purpose is made and occasions are foreseen; c) throughout the whole time of the day acts of virtue or mortification are exercised, so that day by day the good is progressively increased and the evil diminished; d) in the evening the discussion is instituted, progress is examined, sorrow is elicited concerning the fall or negligence, and inquiry is made concerning their causes or occasions; e) the purpose is renewed for the next day, and means are established for avoiding the causes and occasions.[10]

[10] Concerning examination of conscience, cf. *La Vie spirituelle*, t. XIV, year 1926.

VIII. Specifically as regards the frequenting of the Sacraments.

A. As regards confession: 1) Generally it is expedient to suggest to beginners that they make a general confession,[11] unless they have already made one well or have been agitated by scruples.

[11] See above, p. 53 sqq.

2. As regards ordinary confession, although certain persons of very tender conscience have been accustomed to confess daily, ordinarily, however, it suffices to confess once, or, exceptionally, at most twice in a week.

3. He who lacks the opportunity of confessing and is burdened by venial sin, even one altogether deliberate, ought not on that account to omit communion, both because venial sin does not impede communion, and also because, besides confession, it can be remitted by other remedies, e.g., by an act of contrition or charity virtually retracting it; indeed it can happen that on this occasion he prepares himself for communion by more fervent acts of contrition, confidence, and humility.

4. In the confession of venial sins, one must beware lest they be declared from mere custom and as a mere narration, without contrition or purpose, or only in general; - but let them accuse in species a few sins well determined, with the cause or motive of sinning added; besides, let them add some defect to be extirpated, by which the state of the soul may become more known to the confessor, or even some graver sin from the past life.

5. That confession may be truly devout, let it not be made without preparation, nor only with examination having preceded, humble and sincere accusation, true sorrow and efficacious purpose, but let the penitent also seek means of amendment and resolve to avoid the occasions of sins.

6. When carefully made, confession purifies, restores, and confirms, and joins one more to God.

B. As regards communion, conformably to the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, 20 Dec. 1905:

1. For communion, even frequent and daily communion, strictly only two things are required: the state of grace and right intention, by which, namely, one does not indulge custom or vanity or human motives, e.g., empty rivalry, desire of gaining the benevolence of superiors, or sensible sweetness rather than solid piety, but intends to please God, or wishes to be joined more closely to Him by charity, or to meet his own infirmities and defects. For Communion is not the reward of virtue or merit, but a means for acquiring virtue; nor was it instituted before all things for honoring God, but for the utility of men.

2. Yet that communion may be more devout, it is especially expedient that even fully deliberate venial sins be absent, and especially affection toward them; all the more because if this actually perseveres, it impedes the effect of the sacrament, which is fervor or the actual exercise and sweetness of charity. Nevertheless this is not strictly required; indeed, if a pious, right, and sincere intention is present, it cannot happen that those communicating frequently do not free themselves from venial sins and affection toward them.

3. Since the sacraments of the New Law produce a greater effect in proportion to greater dispositions, it must altogether be cared for that careful preparation precede and thanksgiving follow, according to each one's strength, duties, and condition. For one very fervent communion can produce much more fruit than several ordinary ones, or many tepid ones.

4. In frequenting Holy Communion, for the sake of greater prudence and fruit, it is necessary that the counsel of the confessor intervene; not indeed that he may keep away those who have a right intention, but that he may render them more certain concerning right disposition; and stimulate all to a more fervent disposition and greater purity; and also sometimes prohibit those whose right disposition is held suspect, namely so that they may be taught to approach more fervently. Such are those who after many communions do not care about venial sins, but commit them altogether deliberately and with the same frequency as recidivists, and indulge very much, for example, vices of the tongue, or lead a worldly or tepid life.

5. Careful preparation will have to be procured, both remote and proximate. Remote, by which they are habitually preserved in purity, day by day free themselves more from every fault and defect, and burn with a greater desire for Holy Communion; proximate, which consists in diverse affections: living faith, great confidence in Christ, ardent desire, humble contrition even concerning venial sins, profound reverence, and especially perfect unitive charity, which namely more aptly disposes to the proper effect of the sacrament.

6. Thanksgiving should consist in most fervent acts: a vivid and, insofar as can be done, persevering love by which we desire that Jesus be loved more by us and by all creatures; profound adoration; full oblation and handing over of self; subjection of the intellect through faith and of the will through charity; submission of all powers to the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ; pious gratitude; humble petition; and through the day an enduring remembrance of so great a benefit.

But care seems to have to be applied to thanksgiving all the more because, while the species remain, the sacrament continues to produce fruit *ex opere operato*, not indeed an increase of habitual grace, but the fervor and sweetness of charity, unless by distraction, neglect, or inordinate affection we place an obstacle.

IX. Corollary. - Therefore true devotion is much impeded by:

1. adhesion to earthly consolations, even licit ones; for the spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other;

2. deliberate venial sins, because they make charity tepid;

3. an excessive abundance of occupations, which distracts the mind, dissipates the heart, and calls one away from God. Hence if many occupations are imposed on someone by office, let him take care to do them for the cause of pleasing God, and from time to time amid occupations to recollect himself in God.

X. Things to be avoided by confessors. - St. Alphonsus wisely admonishes the confessor:[12]

[12] O. c., n. 100.

1. That he employ the greatest care lest he take away or diminish liberty of approaching another confessor. Therefore let him beware lest he prohibit devout penitents, especially women, from approaching another; and if they have approached, let him show that this is pleasing to him; indeed, unless they are scrupulous, let him himself also impose on them that they sometimes confess to others, otherwise he can be a cause of sacrileges.

2. That he not show himself solicitous about taking upon himself the direction of some soul.

3. That he never speak without necessity concerning the defects of other confessors, but rather carefully seek to excuse them from some error committed.

4. That he not take up the direction of someone who wishes to leave his director, unless there is an urgent cause, such as a defect of virtue or even of doctrine in him, or a propensity to vanity; not, however, because the penitent feels some aversion toward him, or because he seems no longer to have faith in his words, for often this is a temptation of the devil. And from this dissipations, disturbances, and sometimes even scandals often arise.

5. Let him beware lest he show himself partial and inclined to one penitent before others, and attach himself to some soul; this holds not only concerning younger and lighter persons, but also concerning very devout and spiritual persons, with whom there is danger of a greater adhesion. Therefore let him not expend all care, time, and labor with one or another; if someone needs greater assistance, let not therefore a more sparing or insufficient care be had for others; hence it can also be expedient to assign to that more needy person a special day and time, so that others suffer no inconvenience.

6. If it happens, as can occur although it happens more rarely, that a devout person falls into mortal sin, let the confessor show no sign of astonishment or indignation, but, after the example of Christ looking upon Peter fallen, let him receive that person kindly, excite him to hope, sorrow, charity, humility, and beware lest the penitent hand himself over to inordinate sadness.[13] But if this fall greatly displeases him, it must be seen whether it is indignation of pride or of holy sorrow: pride is to be repressed, sorrow is not to be extinguished.

[13] Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, n. 208.

7. Finally, let the confessor generally be expeditious in hearing the confessions of pious and devout persons, especially women; let him accustom them to brevity of speech in the confessional; certainly a devout woman to whom an expeditious confessor is pleasing gives a good sign of true virtue.[14]

[14] Ibid., n. 211.

XI. Observations. - God is accustomed to send upon the pious and devout both spiritual or even sensible consolations, that He may draw them back from earthly pleasures and excite them to the exercise of virtue, and also desolations, or even temptations, that He may prove their fidelity and raise them to greater perfection. Concerning these it must be noted:

A. As regards consolations:

a) Let a man know that true devotion consists in a prompt, strong, and constant will of serving God and doing whatever pleases Him, but not in sensible sweetness of heart or even spiritual sweetness; hence one must not adhere to these.

b) Besides, let him judge and confess himself unworthy of the gift of divine consolation, and strive to draw his soul away from earthly pleasures, excite it to arduous virtues, and join it more to God.

c) Meanwhile let him prepare himself for desolation: for God's visitations are neither constant nor do they happen equally to all, but He grants them now that we not be cast down, now He withdraws them lest we abuse them and turn them into vice, I mean vain glory or negligence in exercises. Thus He acts lest we slide into pride, but so that we may acknowledge that they are only gifts of God, and also that we may more ardently desire God's visitations, yet without adhering to them but to God alone: namely, exercising virtue and laboring by our own determination, not on account of consolations, but because this is owed and pleases God.

d) Hence they are not to be expected from God, except with perfect submission toward Him, according as it shall please Him to give or deny them.

B. God also sends desolations, which are sometimes accompanied by vehement temptations and movements of impurity, anger, blasphemy, unbelief, and also despair, by which devout souls are affected with great sorrow. For since consolations are gifts of God but not God Himself, it is necessary that the soul recede from divine gifts in order to love the giver Himself. "That He may draw souls away even from His own gifts," says St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, n. 125, "and compel them to love the giver with a purer love, God brings it about that they no longer find in prayer their customary food and usual consolation, but wearinesses, aridities, torments, and sometimes even temptations."

Hence let the confessor be solicitous:

a) that they not lose courage, judging that they are not in the grace of God, but on the contrary that in desolations they see a sign that God wills to nourish them with more solid food and lead them to solid virtue, to greater sanctification, since for those who love God all things work together unto good, Rom. VIII, 28;

b) that he strengthen and stimulate them not to omit prayers and Holy Communion or even other spiritual exercises, which from this become more pleasing to God and often more meritorious;

c) that he inculcate to them that he who loves God on account of consolations loves God's consolations more than God Himself, and on the contrary that he who loves God and adheres to Him without consolations shows Him a true, pure, and firm love;

d) let him show that there is no safer and shorter way to perfection than patience in tribulations: the more we suffer, the more perfectly we are drawn away from creatures, are purged from self-love, are united more intimately to God, and are assimilated to Christ;

e) aided by divine light, let him inquire from what cause spiritual desolation arises; for this the penitent should willingly expose the state of the soul with all humility. Desolation can come either from a voluntary defect, such as abuse of consolation through pride, sluggishness, adhesion to a creature, and then the penitent should grieve concerning the fault, ask pardon, humbly admit

desolations as punishment, and be renewed into former fervor; - or from bodily fatigue and from natural indisposition, and then there will be place for honest recreation and bodily exercise, or sometimes even for the intervention of a physician, that strength may be restored; - or from God Himself, who intends to purify the soul, and then they are to be willingly accepted, without a more curious investigation concerning the divine intention, saying like Christ: Father, remove this chalice from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done, Luke XXII, 42.

C. As regards temptations. Those who tend to progress of virtue are attacked by special temptations, for more efficaciously overcoming which they need the prudent counsel of the confessor.

1. At the beginning: rather often, excited from a certain natural fervor or by spiritual consolations, they easily presume upon their strength and wish to undertake excessive or greater things; but afterward, delights having been withdrawn, they no less easily lose their former ardor and fall into dejection of soul, judging that they cannot attain virtue. Therefore a) let him fortify them from the beginning that the business of perfection is not completed in one day but by slow degree;

b) let him not trust much in fervent beginnings;

c) especially let him instruct them that true and solid progress consists not in delights but in spiritual struggle, and in a firm will of doing whatever pleases God and avoiding whatever displeases Him, and that God, who looks upon the heart, rewards efforts more than apparent progress. Accordingly let them commit themselves with a great soul to the good pleasure of God.

2. After some progress: those who have served God for some time, wearied after some time by the spiritual struggle, often look back, wishing to stand still where they are, and by love of comfort are solicited to tepidity. From this it happens that they decline a little, curtail the exercises of prayers and mortifications, or omit them, or accomplish them negligently, receive the sacraments without fitting preparation, flee difficult things, esteem perfection less, grow in love of the world and pleasures, etc. This is with difficulty adverted to at the beginning of the time, but easily with progress. From this it happens that they begin to hold light defects as small, and admit them deliberately, and sometimes, when temptation presses, slide into mortal sin.

This evil must be carefully treated. Hence:

a) let them be seriously admonished concerning the danger which they incur: he who does not progress in the way of God, by that very fact, because concupiscences and temptations arise, regresses; hence also slow tepidity is often more dangerous than mortal sin itself, Apoc. III, 15-16;

b) let them be excited to greater fervor, both because those who have been heaped with more abundant graces are held to greater perfection, and because the loss of time and grace is treated severely by God, and because God, the best and greatest, deserves to be worshiped with all the strength we can;

c) let them be ordered to resume and perform well all neglected exercises of devotion, especially mental prayer and examination of conscience, or even to increase them for some time, or also to make a sacred retreat.

d) But if kind exhortation does not profit, let them be treated with severity and terrified by the terror of divine judgment.

3. Finally in the more advanced state of virtue: from time to time they are caught in the snare of pride, vain glory, and a certain rash presumption. From this it happens that, forgetful of the necessity of divine help, they are pleased with themselves in their own strength, rashly throw themselves into certain occasions of sin, and hold negligence in small matters as harmless, and are deceived by vain illusions; thus anger is judged zeal, pertinacity is held for constancy, prodigality for liberality, self-love for divine love, sensual love for charity. Hence they can also fall into grave sin, although more rarely.

For these things it will profit a) generally to use instant prayer, discussion of self, consideration of one's need and fragility, and frequent remembrance of sins;

b) specifically, as regards the practice of virtues, counsel and simple and humble obedience to the confessor, and particular examination; and for avoiding illusions, let them do nothing extraordinary without the confessor having been consulted.

XII. Warning concerning false devotees. - Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, n. 212, notes:

"From truly devout persons those are to be distinguished whose devotion is either hypocrisy, for deceiving others, or illusion, by which they themselves are deceived. All their devotion consists in external exercises of religion; namely they frequent church, recite many prayers, confess often, and several times in the week receive Holy Communion. Nevertheless they neither understand nor care for true and solid virtue, but teem with vices; they remain in church longer than is fitting, with disturbance of parents and neglect of the domestic matter; they frequent the Sacraments that they may be seen by men and praised; wherefore, if the confessor does not indulge them to communicate as often as they would wish, they bear the rebuff badly; in the confessional they desire to converse with the confessor for a long time, without any utility or necessity. The spirit of mortification is altogether lacking to them; therefore they gape after delights in food and drink, abhor labor, and are talkative. They lack humility and obedience; therefore they do not subject themselves to the direction of the confessor, but the confessor would have to obey their nods; they deceive the confessor, while they confess only very light faults, but graver ones, such as we here enumerate, they do not accuse; they affect praises and honors, cling to their own sense, are impatient of correction, spurn others and correct them arrogantly. They are destitute of charity toward the neighbor, whence they are very troublesome to their household, spare the good name of no one, envy others, are easily angry, etc. - Among persons devout in appearance are to be numbered certain matrons and young ladies who wish to join a worldly life, given to delights and luxury, with piety; hence they frequent both theaters and church, attend nightly dances and sacred processions, read romantic books and books of prayers, frequent the Sacraments and pursue worldly circles.

"Indeed there are those who also wish to be contemplative and are eager always to speak about spiritual things. Meanwhile there lies hidden, or even appears, often an immense pride, tenacity of one's own judgment, foolish imaginations, false madnesses. They neither cultivate nor understand virtues; they are wholly lacking in a spirit of mortification, humble and simple obedience, genuine charity toward the neighbor, patience.

"Such persons are to be brought back to true humility, then to a pure intention in all things. Afterward they are to be directed according to the common rules, and carefully taught in what true devotion consists."[15]

[15] Theol. Mechl., Treatise *de Virtutibus*, n. 90, q. 2. Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction a la vie devote*, p. I, ch. I.

Question II: Concerning the Perfect and Contemplatives

I. The obligation of the confessor to acquire knowledge of the perfect spiritual life. - "When some soul is given by God the grace of contemplation," says St. Alphonsus, "it is necessary that the confessor know very well the manner in which he ought to direct it, so that he may free it from all illusions; otherwise he will bring it the greatest harm; and, as St. John of the Cross says, he himself will have to render a great account to God," *Pr. Conf.*, n. 126. "And therefore... let him not omit to consult other men more learned, and of greater experience... in the direction of some elevated soul, and one which has been endowed by God with some supernatural graces, when he himself is little experienced in this matter..."; or even "let him feel no difficulty whatever in prescribing to souls of this kind that for direction they betake themselves to more expert masters; or at least that they undergo their judgment," ibid., n. 194.

Therefore we admonish the confessors of such penitents that, in order to acquire competent knowledge, it is necessary that they go to learned books which expound the right doctrine of the spiritual life; and, for their sake, we set down the essential notions and general principles of direction concerning the perfect life.[1]

[1] Concerning perfection and the perfect and contemplative life, cf. St. Thomas, II-II, qq. 179-184, with the commentary of Cajetan; in III Sent. d. 35; little work *de Perfectione vitae spiritualis*; St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*; Dionysius the Carthusian, *de Contemplatione*; *de Fonte lucis*; Lud. Blosius, *Institutio spiritualis*; St. Francis de Sales, *Traite de l'Amour de Dieu*; St. Teresa, *Opera*; St. John of the Cross, *Opera*; Suarez, *De Religione*, tr. 4; John of St. Thomas, *Comm. in summam S. Thomae*, where concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit and concerning prayer; Philip of the Most Holy Trinity, *Summa theologiae mysticae*; Passerini, *de Hominum statibus et officiis*; Thomas de Vallgornera, *Mystica theologia Divi Thomae*; Joseph of the Holy Spirit, *Cursus theologiae mystico-scholasticae*; Schram, *Institutiones theologiae mysticae*; Scaramelli, *Directorium mysticum*; St. Alphonsus, *Praxis conf.*, nn. 126-144; Marc, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 1843-1847; Theol. Mechl., de Virt., nn. 88-90, pp. 220-223; n. 100, pp. 251-254; Frassinetti, *Th. M.*, diss. 15, § 6; Meynard, *Traite de la Vie interieure, Somme de theologie ascetique et mystique*; Saudreau, *Des degres de la Vie Spirituelle*; *La Vie d'Union a Dieu*; *L'etat mystique*; *Les Faits extraordinaires de la Vie spirituelle*; Poulain, *Des Graces d'Oraison*; Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection chretienne et Contemplation*; Tanquerey, *Precis de theologie ascetique et mystique*; Lemonnyer, *La Vie humaine, ses formes, ses etats*, in the French version of the *Summa* of St. Thomas; Ill. Waffelaert in the periodical *Collationes Brugenses*, passim; likewise two periodicals: *La Vie spirituelle*, and *Revue d'ascetique et de Mystique*, of which one is directed by the Preachers, the other by the Jesuits.

II. In what the perfection of Christian life consists. - "Essentially the perfection of Christian life consists in charity," says St. Thomas, II-II, q. 184, a. 3; hence, a man will be the more perfect, the greater charity he has, by which the soul is joined to God. For "each thing is said to be perfect insofar as it attains its proper end, which is the ultimate perfection of the thing. But charity is what unites us to God, who is the ultimate end of the human mind," ibid., a. 1, and perfect beatitude. Hence by charity alone our mind is perfected and is able to rest peacefully.

Already St. Augustine says, *De Nat. et Gr.*, c. 42, that the truest, fullest, and most perfect charity is justice, if, namely, charity itself is perfect.[2]

[2] Cf. Suarez, *De Religione*, Tr. 7, l. I, c. 3, n. 4.

Hence: 1) Since charity in this life is not in a consummated and perfect state, perfection in this life is only begun and incomplete: namely consummated and perfect charity is always actually borne toward God; this cannot happen in the present life, but only in the fatherland through the intuitive vision of God, ibid., a. 2; and q. 24, a. 8; q. 44, a. 4, ad 2.

2. Perfection does not formally consist in good works, fasts, prayers, alms, or in the exercise of moral virtues, even most perfect exercise, as in the evangelical counsels. For all these things are only means, instruments, and helps for acquiring perfection. Namely moral virtues and good works are a necessary means by which dispositions toward perfection are introduced into the soul, so that without them, according to the ordinary providence of God, it is impossible to obtain it; in the same manner as study is necessary for acquiring science, ibid., a. 3 and a. 1, ad 2. With greater reason the evangelical counsels are an opportune means, since they more efficaciously exclude all impediments of perfection or fervent charity, according to Christ, Mt. XIX, 21, so that now we tend more freely into God. - Therefore:[3]

[3] Concerning these and the following, Suarez, l. c., n. 16 sqq., can also be seen.

a) Moral virtues also are said to furnish perfection, not however simply, but only in a certain respect, St. Thomas saying: "Christian life consists specially in charity, by which the soul is joined to God... And therefore according to charity the perfection of Christian life is attended to simply, but according to other virtues in a certain respect," a. 1, ad 2.

b) In the evangelical counsels there is perfection, not however essentially of itself, but only secondarily and accidentally, a. 3.

3. Nor does perfection formally consist in the virtues of faith and hope: for these in some way, even proximately, join us to God, and without them it is impossible to love God, unless, namely, we first know His goodness by faith, and hope for help and eternal life from Him. But nevertheless charity alone joins perfectly, because it makes a man adhere to God for His own sake, uniting the mind of man to God through the affection of love, so that, namely, man does not live for himself but for God, II-II, q. 17, a. 6 and ad 1: "But faith and hope make man adhere to God as to a certain principle from which certain things come to us... both knowledge of truth and attainment of perfect goodness. Therefore faith makes man adhere to God insofar as He is for us a principle of knowing truth; but hope makes him adhere to God insofar as He is in us the principle of perfect goodness, namely insofar as through hope we lean upon divine help for obtaining beatitude," q. 17, a. 6. Therefore charity is "more powerful, which attains God more... Faith and hope indeed attain God insofar as from Him there comes to us either knowledge of the true or attainment of the good; but charity attains God Himself, that it may stand in Him, and not that something may come from Him; and therefore charity is more excellent than faith and hope, and consequently than all other virtues," q. 23, a. 6.

Hence charity "holds itself nearer to the object, God... and in this way... it is greater than the others. For the others import in their notion distance from the object: for faith concerns things not seen, and hope concerns things not possessed. But the love of charity concerns what is already possessed: for the beloved is in a certain way in the lover, and the lover through affection is drawn to union with the beloved; on account of which it is said, 1 John IV, 16: He who remains in charity remains in God and

God in him," I-II, q. 66, a. 6; II-II, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3. Hence charity alone remains in the other life, I-II, q. 67, aa. 3, 4, 6; but faith and hope without charity are unformed and dead, II-II, q. 23, a. 7; I-II, q. 65, a. 3; II-II, q. 4, a. 5.

Therefore perfection can fittingly be defined: charity prompt and ready for exercising acts, and those as perfect as can be.[4]

[4] Suarez, o. c., l. I, c. 4, n. 19.

III. Is there an obligation of tending to perfection? - An obligation of tending to perfection in some way lies upon all; for, as St. Thomas says, q. 186, a. 2, ad 2: "Just as all are held to love God from the whole heart... so also all, both religious and seculars, are held in some way to do whatever good they can: for to all in common it is said, Eccles. IX, 10: Whatever your hand can do, work earnestly. Yet there is some manner of fulfilling this precept by which sin is avoided, namely if a man does what he can according as the condition of his state requires, provided contempt of doing better things is not present, by which the soul is hardened against spiritual progress."

The tendency to greater perfection of itself belongs only to counsel, namely "insofar as from the affection of man there is excluded not only that which is contrary to charity, but also all that which impedes the affection from being directed totally into God; without which perfection charity can exist, as in beginners and proficients," II-II, q. 184, a. 2.

Hence: 1) it is said to all, even laymen, Mt. V, 48: "Be therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect"; Jas. I, 4: "Patience has a perfect work, that you may be perfect, lacking in nothing"; and Eph. VI, 13: "Take the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and in all things stand perfect."

2. Nevertheless a higher perfection can also be required in a man "according as the condition of his state requires," II-II, q. 186, a. 2, ad 2, as in priests, q. 184, aa. 6 and 8, and *Supplement*, q. 35, a. 1, ad 3.

3. Likewise greater perfection befits religious, as those who are in the state of tending to perfection, and with greater reason bishops, II-II, q. 186, aa. 5, 6, 7.

IV. Threefold grade or state in perfection. - In order to perfection, or the progressive ascent of the mind to God, there is distinguished a threefold grade of charity or state of the just, who study to live and advance in charity, namely of beginners, of proficients, and of the perfect.

"First indeed there lies upon man the principal study of receding from sin and resisting its concupiscences, which move contrary to charity; and this pertains to beginners, in whom charity is to be nourished and fostered, lest it be corrupted. But a second study succeeds, that man principally intend to this, that he advance in the good; and this study pertains to proficients, who principally intend to this, that in them charity be strengthened by increase. But the third study is, that man principally intend to this, that he adhere to God and enjoy Him; and this pertains to the perfect, who desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," II-II, q. 24, a. 9.

In other words, it is necessary 1) to avoid sin and therefore to mortify the passions and repress concupiscence; 2) the passions having been calmed and concupiscence restrained, to be exercised

more and to advance in virtue; 3) the passions having been subdued and concupiscence almost extinguished, to enjoy divine union.

Yet these three states are never found so distinct that each of them does not participate in something of the others, ibid., ad 2 and 3; therefore in any state whatever one must unceasingly apply oneself to mortification, to the exercise of virtues, and to divine love; but in the first grade one must insist more upon mortification, in the second upon progress in virtue, in the third upon the perfect exercise of charity. According to the three aforesaid states, three ways of those who study perfection are also customarily distinguished: purgative, illuminative, and unitive. The way of beginners is called purgative because first and of itself it tends to purging the soul from sins and stripping off the old man with his acts by mortifying the passions, so that charity may be preserved. The way of proficients is called illuminative, because of itself it tends to this, that, the passions having been calmed, the mind, more immune from vices and concupiscences, now may be more abundantly illuminated by God concerning Christian virtues, and may manfully apply itself to the operation of virtues and the increase of charity, and through this the new man may be put on. The way of the perfect is called unitive, because, the passions having been subdued and the practice of virtues acquired, and thus internal peace and tranquility of soul obtained, of itself and especially it is ordered to the prompt and delightful exercise of charity and to the closest union of the soul with God.

V. Threefold perfect life. - In order to Christian perfection there is also distinguished a threefold life: active, contemplative, and mixed. Benedict XIV, *de Can.*, l. 3, c. 26, n. 4, explains this distinction:

"For those among the faithful who continually, or at least frequently, devote themselves to the exercise of works of spiritual and corporal mercy, and to the assiduous exercise of virtues toward God and the neighbor, whether the works are of precept or of counsel, are said to live the active life. - Those who devote themselves to continual, or at least frequent, consideration of God and of divine things and of all revealed things, endowed with charity together with total abdication of the world, purity of heart, and subjection of the passions, are said to live the contemplative life. - Finally, those who perform those things which have just been said, and who exercise themselves now in the active life, now in the contemplative, are said to live the mixed life."

Altogether conformably to St. Thomas, who teaches in II-II, q. 179:

1. the division of human life, that is, life conforming to right reason or perfect life, into active and contemplative: "Each living thing is shown to live from the operation most proper to it, to which it is most inclined; as... the life of men is said to consist in this, that they understand and act according to reason. Hence also among men the life of each man seems to be that in which he most delights, and to which he most intends, and in which each especially wishes to live with a friend... Therefore, because certain men especially intend to contemplation of truth, but certain ones principally intend to exterior actions, from this it is that the life of man is fittingly divided into active and contemplative," a. 1. Therefore, just as the contemplative life essentially consists in the contemplation of divine truth, so the active life essentially consists in the exercise of the moral virtues;[5]

[5] Cf. q. 180, aa. 1-4, and q. 181, a. 7.

2. that this division of itself is sufficient and complete: "That division is given concerning human life, which indeed is attended to according to the intellect. But the intellect is divided into active and contemplative, because the end of intellectual cognition is either cognition of truth itself, which pertains to the contemplative intellect; or some exterior action, which pertains to the practical or active intellect. And therefore life also is sufficiently divided into active and contemplative," art. 2;

3. that the mixed life is not a third genus really distinct, but is a middle life composed from each, by which, namely, someone intends to the study of contemplation and from this also breaks forth into exterior acts, yet in such a way that either contemplation or action predominates: "Middles are made from extremes, and therefore are contained virtually in them..., and similarly under active and contemplative there is comprehended that which is composed from both. And nevertheless just as in any mixed thing some simple element predominates, so also in the middle genus of life sometimes the contemplative superabounds, but sometimes the active," ibid., ad 2. Now:

a) The purely contemplative life of itself is to be preferred to the active life, as being simply better, as the Fathers and Theologians teach, interpreting thus the words of Christ, Luke X, 42, Mary has chosen the best part, handing down Mary as a symbol of the contemplative life, Martha as a symbol of the active life. - St. Thomas hands down a multiple reason for this doctrine, II-II, q. 182, a. 1, and adds: "in a certain respect, however, and in a case, the active life is more to be chosen because of the necessity of the present life." Hence, of themselves, those religious institutes which lead a contemplative life, such as the monks of St. Benedict and the Carmelites, are more excellent than religious institutes of the active life, q. 188, a. 6.

b) The active life is multiple and of diverse perfection according to diverse varied occupations, and thus "preeminence can be attended to according as one religious institute is ordered to a higher act in the same genus, as among the works of the active life it is better to redeem captives than to receive guests," ibid. But among the works of the active life the first place is held by actions which are directly ordered to the salvation of souls. Hence more perfect than institutes which are ordered to the care of the sick or to the instruction of youth are those which apply themselves to the active life of the sacred ministry, such as the more recent clerical religious institutes founded from the sixteenth century onward.

c) The mixed life from the contemplative and active together is more perfect than either, both because it embraces the perfection of each, and because it is the life which Christ and the Apostles led. This belongs to bishops, q. 182, a. 1, ad 1; and a religious institute can be founded for it, such as the Order of Preachers. Namely, when "the work of the active life... is derived from the fullness of contemplation, as teaching and preaching,... this is preferred to simple contemplation. For just as it is greater to illuminate than merely to shine, so it is greater to hand on to others the things contemplated than merely to contemplate," q. 188, a. 6.

"It can happen, however, that someone merits more in the works of the active life than another in the works of the contemplative or mixed life, for example if, on account of the abundance of divine love, that His will may be fulfilled, for His glory, he sometimes sustains being separated for a time from the sweetness of divine contemplation," q. 182, a. 2.

VI. Contemplation strictly so called, insofar as it is distinguished from meditation or common mental prayer, is "the elevation of a mind suspended in God, tasting the joys of eternal sweetness," says *Scala claustralium*, c. 1 at the end,[6] or "a simple intuition of truth," II-II, q. 180, a. 3, ad 1.

[6] Migne, P. L., t. CLXXXIV, col. 746.

Contemplation differs from meditation: the latter is instituted by the labor of discourse or by a succession of images and representations, by which we seek to know God; the former without labor beholds God, now found, by a simple intuition; - in the latter the soul operates by its own acts through the powers of grace, namely by acts of its own powers elevated by grace; the former God operates in a special way, namely through the more perfect gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the soul rather suffers, because the very light and divine love, by which it is then wholly filled, render it sweetly attentive to contemplating the goodness of God.[7]

[7] Cf. St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, n. 126.

Contemplation can be distinguished as natural or scientific, and supernatural or Christian. The first occurs in a human or active manner, and concerns any truth whatever; namely, an inquiry or demonstration of truth having been completed, someone without labor and with sweetness attends to the truth, whatever it may be: thus by one intuition he knows truths which he had known only by long discourse and labor. The other turns about supernatural truths as such, which the intellect, instructed by supernatural habits and gifts, under their light and motion, considers from the intention of charity above the human mode, and more passively than actively. The first stops in the intellect; the other passes to affection through love.

In the present matter we treat only of Christian contemplation of supernatural truths. This, St. Thomas teaching, "although it consists essentially in the intellect, nevertheless has its principle in the affection, insofar, namely, as someone is incited to contemplation from the charity of God. And because the end corresponds to the principle, from this it is that the term and end of the contemplative life also has its being in the affection, while, namely, someone delights in the vision of the thing loved, and the very delight of the thing seen further excites love," II-II, q. 180, a. 7, ad 1.

It is perfected by one act, although there can be many acts preparatory to it, by which we ascend to it.[8] Three gifts of the Holy Spirit concur for it: of itself the gift of understanding, sometimes the gift of knowledge, especially the gift of wisdom. Of itself the gift of understanding, whose office is to penetrate and to behold by a simple gaze, in the darkness of faith, divine truths; for this reason it is called by St. Catherine of Siena the light of living faith. Sometimes the gift of knowledge, insofar as by the instinct of the Holy Spirit, from a right judgment of creatures, we ascend to the knowledge of God. Especially the gift of wisdom, through which by affective cognition we judge concerning God and divine things from a certain connaturality and affinity, and perceive and as it were taste them: this is most properly contemplation.

[8] St. Thomas, II-II, q. 180, a. 3.

By reason of the mode by which the soul attains the object, one contemplation occurs through affirmation, another through negation,[9] "insofar as God in this life is known... by mode of excellence and removal"; and whatever goodness and perfection is found in creatures, we attribute most excellently to God as the first principle of all, every imperfection being excluded; or, on the contrary, whatever is found in creatures, we deny of God, who is superexalted, superessential, and

supercomprehensible, and thus we see what He is not. Yet this latter does not stop in mere negation, but forms a general and confused concept, by which the mind, all created perfections having been removed, apprehends that God is infinitely perfect, most pure, and most eminent. And therefore it is more perfect than the first, because under the special action of infused divine light, from the abundance of light, it brings in a concept far greater of the divine greatness, and thus God is known more clearly and sublimely. It is called divine darkness, clear darkness, and sublime cognition of God through ignorance.[10]

[9] St. Thomas, comm. in Dion. *de div. Nom.* c. 4, l. 4; I, q. 13, a. 1; q. 4, aa. 1 and 2. Cf. Dionysius the Carthusian, *de Fonte lucis*, a. 13.

[10] II-II, q. 8, a. 7.

Now, however, very many more recent authors are accustomed also to distinguish a twofold contemplation by reason of principle: acquired, as they say, or active, and infused or passive, which many call extraordinary. Yet this division, which seems unknown to the ancients, cannot be proved and is not proposed without danger. For a) both enjoy and are described by authors with the same characters, gifts, and distinctive notes; b) every supernatural contemplation, from the lowest grade to the highest, is one in species from the identity of the formal eliciting principle, which is the intellect instructed by supernatural habits not only of the virtues but also by the gifts: for it occurs under the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and therefore under His motion, for receiving which the gifts are ordained, and for this reason there is none which is not supernatural or infused; c) nor can any properly be called extraordinary or as if miraculous, since the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the connatural principles of any contemplation whatever, even the highest; d) but if it is said that after meditation or study, after the manner of philosophers, the soul now can by one intuition contemplate truths subjected to meditation, this will be merely natural contemplation; which besides, considering the condition of fallen nature, cannot endure sufficiently that from it there be constituted a distinct state of mental prayer.

VII. Various grades of prayer. - Therefore computing the diverse manners of conducting oneself by which mental prayer is instituted, not only those which regard contemplation, but also those which pertain to meditation and common mental prayer and are as if preparatory to contemplation, several grades of perfection in prayer can be distinguished: the first is of discursive prayer or meditation through discourse; the second is of affective prayer; the third of recollection; the fourth of quiet or leisure; the fifth of simple union; the sixth of ecstatic union or espousal; the seventh of consummated union or spiritual marriage.

The first two regard common mental prayer, and access to both, at least after some time, lies open to all the pious and devout; hence to these, generally and of themselves, all are to be directed. They pertain to the active ascetical life and to the purgative and illuminative way.

The last grades, from quiet onward, certainly consist in the mystical or passive life, and constitute contemplative prayer properly so called, which is totally directed by the Holy Spirit. Of this, St. John of the Cross testifying, there is a threefold sign: a) if the soul can no longer bear meditation, b) if it experiences no desire of fixing the imagination on some object, c) if it loves to remain alone with God. This last is the principal, because the two former are not absolutely certain, since they also sometimes arise from other causes, such as from bodily indisposition.

The third grade seems to be intermediate, and as it were mixed prayer, so that by some a twofold recollection is distinguished, one acquired, the other infused. But it is better said to pertain of itself to the ascetical life and to active mental prayer, yet in such a way that it disposes to passivity, and in it certain motions are given transitorily under infused divine light and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gathering the senses, and thus inviting the soul to a more perfect life and to contemplation properly so called: thus especially if it is frequent and habitual, and fully evolved and very simple, as if nascent contemplation.[11]

[11] Cf. Tanquerey, *L'Oraison de simplicite* in the periodical *La Vie spirituelle*, t. III.

In species: 1) Discursive prayer is when the cognitive faculties have the first parts in it, passing and discoursing from truth to truth.

2. Affective prayer, when the first parts are now not with the cognitive faculties but with the appetitive, so that affections of the will and heart predominate.

3. Prayer of recollection, also called of simplicity because it occurs without ratiocination and without labor, when the intellect, abstracted from external things and gathered within itself, without labor and with sweetness attends to supernatural truths and to God, being sweetly attracted by God.

4. Quiet, in which a more ardent love is immediately communicated to the spirit in the very center of the soul, and sometimes is diffused even to the senses themselves: thus the will is suspended in its natural activity and remains as if bound, because then it is not able to love any object besides God, who draws it to Himself; but the intellect and memory or phantasy remain free and sometimes run here and there.

5. Passive union, by which God presents Himself to be seen, in darkness, by the soul not merely as nearby, as in the preceding grades, but as present; and the soul experiences Him joined to itself through a certain sweet contact. In the darkness there is a clear idea of God present, who joins Himself to the soul in the center of the soul, so that it cannot doubt the truth of that presence. In this darkness all the interior powers are suspended, and sometimes the exterior powers, which are at least weakened: for it fixes the mind and keeps it immobile; hence memory recalls nothing except God, the will is so joined to God that it cannot love another, the intellect is filled with so great a light that it is not able to think of another thing, nor even of the graces which it actually receives. It is namely a union which the soul does not see, nor feel, nor advert itself to have.

6. Union of espousal, in which even the bodily senses are bound in such a way that they do not see, nor hear, nor perceive even cutting or burning, ecstasy. But if the grace is stronger, it snatches the soul to union by a sudden and violent motion, which is called rapture, and indeed sometimes in such a way that the soul feels itself snatched outside itself and raised above itself, elevation of spirit.

7. Finally consummated union, or of spiritual marriage, is the greatest which God can grant in this life, through which the soul is transformed into God and becomes one with God, in that manner as a vessel of water poured into the sea becomes one with the water of the sea. It is a

> state in which the soul is habitually conscious to itself of living the divine life, namely under a continuous divine influence which exercises itself in the innermost depth of its being and in all operations, whereby it happens that God is not only the object, but also shows Himself as the helper who produces them so that they truly are divine. Therefore it feels God living in itself, and itself living in God and through God. But in this union the powers are now not suspended, because, their sensibility now having been purified, they have been made capable of divine union, so that the will loves its God most peacefully, and the intellect knows rightly and attends to this union made in the center of the soul, in the manner as if someone were to gaze upon the sun and know its splendor without injury to the eyes. This union is permanent, so that the soul habitually enjoys the divine presence now joined to itself, and enjoys it in stable peace, which passions no longer disturb.

But God is accustomed to introduce into a firmer state of contemplation through a certain passive purgation of the soul, which He Himself infuses, and by which the soul is purified more from its imperfections, which impede contemplation, than it could effect by its own human manner of acting. It is a certain drawing of grace and divine light, but one which brings pain and obscurity, which God places in the soul while He finds its powers incapable of union, as not sufficiently separated from sensible consolation and material forms. And it is twofold:

a) sensitive aridity, the night of the senses, which is accustomed to precede the prayer of quiet, and endures until the soul is rendered fit for that grade of contemplation: it is a most troublesome withdrawal of sensible devotion, through which the soul is led to a certain alienation from all sensible pleasures, both earthly and spiritual;

b) spiritual aridity, the night of the mind, which is accustomed to precede simple union or even the union of espousal, and prepares for the last grades of contemplation and endures until the soul is rendered capable of divine union. It is a divine light by which God brings it about that the soul recognizes its own nothingness, and the soul sees itself in a certain terrible agony, and, recognizing its imperfections, therefore seems to itself expelled and abandoned by God, as ungrateful for benefits received; it believes all things done by itself to be worthy of punishments, and itself hateful to God; indeed it sometimes experiences a thousand temptations, the punishments of the damned, and divine abandonment.

VIII. Duties of the confessor. - Penitents aspiring to perfection are to be tested, both that they may be promoted, and more often that it may be adverted by what spirit they are led, of God or of self-love, and what affection is predominant in them, and therefore to be mortified before the rest. But the tests should be proportioned to the disposition and temperament of each one. Hence those who are fainthearted are to be treated more lightly; toward those who are great of soul and receive more eminent graces, a certain severity is to be joined to sweetness, because they are equal to difficulties. Yet the testing of these should not be sought out and open; for if penitents advert that they are being tested, they will easily fashion themselves to every mode of humility and abjection. Nor ordinarily should it savor of anything singular, but let it be done from the thing born, so that it does not seem to depart from the common manner of directing ordinary souls; wherefore common and light things are sometimes to be imposed on them: for thus pride and eagerness for extraordinary things will be repressed. The best test is obedience.

But if some persons seem to be endowed with infused contemplation, or are thought to be so by themselves, let the confessor a) frequently implore the divine light which he needs for their testing and direction; b) carefully inquire concerning the intimate phenomena which they experience, and not from the difficulty of understanding the declarations of penitents, who are not able sufficiently to express their spiritual senses and high states of soul, immediately conclude that they are illusions or chimeras; c) nevertheless let him not be facile in admitting supernatural manifestations or mystical graces in those who do not exercise moral virtues, which are accustomed to be a prerequisite preparation for that contemplation.

Moreover for persons who have arrived at higher contemplation, St. Alphonsus most wisely hands down rules of direction:

A. General. The confessor must preserve such a soul in humility, comfort and help it; and therefore:

1. "The confessor must admonish it that it has not therefore become impeccable, and on this account, the more it sees itself endowed by God with graces of this kind, the more humble it ought to be and alienated from all things, loving the cross alone, and living wholly conformed to the divine dispositions, with assiduous fear lest from that time its infidelities be punished more bitterly, because of the greater ingratitude with which they will be committed. St. Teresa says, Mans. 5 and 6, that several souls known to her, which previously had ascended to this state of union, afterward fell headlong into mortal sin," *Pr. conf.*, n. 136.

2. "Let him impose upon the soul... that it faithfully narrate all the communications which it has in prayer, yet let him show no appetite for knowing them; nor let him ever manifest to others the supernatural graces granted to his penitent: for it will happen that they commend themselves to her prayers, and expose her to the greatest danger of becoming proud; or if after this knowledge they behold the lightest defect, they will be greatly scandalized and will hold her in derision," n. 144.

3. "Let him not show to this soul distinguished by such favors any particular sign of admiration, and much less send other penitents to ask counsel from her, or to seek consolation or direction. Rather let him show that he makes less of her than of other souls which walk by the way of faith, because souls adorned with these favors, speaking regularly, are always and much to be humbled," ibid.

4. "If he adverts that the soul preserves humility and fear in these divine communications, it is necessary to help it, indeed also to render it secure as often as he knows this to be expedient. St. Teresa says that the soul will never be moved to doing great things for God unless it knows that it has received great things from God. And indeed the same saint, when... she was made more secure that the gifts which she had received were truly divine, from that time no longer ran to perfection but flew," ibid.

5. "Nor from the fact that the director discerns the soul from time to time falling into some defect, as often as the defects are not fully deliberate or committed with adherence and contempt, ought he to judge all communications of this kind as lies and illusions. The Lord grants such graces not only to perfect souls, but sometimes also to imperfect ones, namely for

this reason, that He may free them from imperfections and raise them to a more perfect life. Hence when it is discerned that through communications of this kind the soul is more and more freed from passions, and advances in divine love and in desire of perfection, it is a sign that those communications are good," ibid.

B. Special. 6) Specifically, "when it is a question of external graces, such as visions, locutions, and revelations, speaking regularly... it is safer that the director show that he makes little of them... because more are false than true; and the more eagerly they are expected, and the more they will be held in price, the more the person will wander from faith and humility, which is the safer way, which God has placed. - Wherefore let him give her the counsel that she pray God to grant the true ecstasy, namely total alienation from earthly things and from herself, without which she will never be able to arrive at great perfection," ibid.

7. During the prayer of recollection, or higher, while the soul is placed in a passive state, "when God speaks or operates, it is necessary that the soul be silent and cease from its own operations, placing nothing else on its own part... than a certain attention of love toward the divine operations," n. 127; namely, it must never contradict the divine inspiration, "nor ought it to investigate more curiously what that interior recollection of spirit is; but let it permit itself to be directed by God to considering those things, and to doing those acts, toward which it knows itself to be borne more by God," n. 133.

8. Consequently, in the aridity of sense, the confessor "must comfort the soul to hope for great things from God, who conducts Himself with it in this way for this end. Let him suggest to it that it not strive to exercise itself in meditation, but humble itself, make an act of oblation, and commit itself wholly to God, most perfectly resigned to the dispositions of His will, which tends wholly to our good," n. 128.

9. Likewise in the aridity of spirit, "let him manfully comfort it to fear nothing..., let him add that God... thus conducts Himself in souls loved by Him... while He leads them by the safer way, namely by the way of the cross. Let him also admonish

a) that first it humble itself as worthy to be thus treated by God on account of the defects of its past life;

b) secondly that it resign itself wholly to the divine will, presenting itself most ready to bear all these things, indeed even greater things, for all the time that it shall please;

c) thirdly... let it cast itself as dead into the arms of divine mercy, and commit itself to the protection of Mary most holy, who is rightly called the mother of mercy and the consoler of the afflicted," n. 130.

10. Yet "let the director know how rightly to discern vicious tepidity from useful aridity, which the Lord sends upon spiritual persons either to test them or to purify them. In each state the soul remains arid and fasting; but there is this difference: that in aridity the will is not destitute of its fervor, indeed it shows itself more diligent in the exercise of virtue, while in tepidity even the will fails."[12]

[12] Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, n. 235.

IX. What is to be thought concerning special liberality and extraordinary gifts. - Although infused contemplation and the mystical life are not properly miraculous, nevertheless there are often granted in them certain special liberalities, such as visions, locutions, and revelations, in which illusion and hallucination easily occur; hence it is greatly important to distinguish them from false ones.

A. Visions are either external, imaginary, or even intellectual; and they can also be caused by the devil. But the probable signs from which their divine origin is discerned are these: 1) if they are rare, sudden, passing after the manner of lightning, yet fixed immovably in the mind; - 2) if from the beginning they bring confusion and terror, but at the end leave the soul in greatest peace and vivid knowledge of its own misery, with an immense desire of perfection. For such things ordinarily do not come from nature; although they can also come from the devil, who "transforms himself into an angel of light"; but "by their fruits you shall know them," that is, demons and false prophets.

B. Locutions, e.g., for imposing works, for instructing, are: either virtual and successive, when someone, meditating, feels himself as if answered by his own spirit itself, but as if it were an external person; - or formal, when the soul perceives by the ears, imaginative faculty, or intellect, certain formed words, but outside itself; these locutions are efficacious when they quickly operate that which they express, as, for example, if the soul were to hear: do not fear, and at once becomes fearless. These latter are safer than all the others; the former, however, are very uncertain, and the second kind very suspect. Hence the director, if he observes that those things which are commanded are contrary to Christian prudence, must altogether prohibit them. But if they are not contrary, it is expedient that he suspend the execution until greater certainty is acquired.

C. Revelations of hidden and future things, e.g., of mysteries of faith, states of consciences, etc., can be had in three ways, namely through visions, through locutions, and through understandings of naked truths. In these one must proceed most cautiously, especially when it is a question of making someone certain on account of knowledge received in revelation.[13] Hence before all things let the confessor order him not to indicate the revelation to others.[14]

[13] Cf. Marc, *Th. M.*, II, n. 1846, conformably to St. Alphonsus, *Pr. Conf.*, nn. 139-142.

[14] St. Alphonsus, ibid., n. 142.

Therefore, where such things occur, let the confessor generally have no faith in them. For not rarely persons think that such things happen to themselves when they have read many things of this kind or have heard of some recent fact, and from this are held by a great desire for them; or persons whose phantasy is fervid; or even whose body has been weakened by infirmities, e.g., hysteria; indeed sometimes direct simulation and hypocrisy also have place.

Yet if valid indications occur, and no sign of hallucination appears, and the person is of solid virtue and settled disposition, then let him weigh the matter not with an incredulous, but with a sober mind and mature examination, according to the rules handed down by approved authors and with those more expert consulted. Meanwhile let him study to test such a person in various ways, especially through humility and obedience, even sometimes by commanding against that person's own sense.

Moreover the principal criteria handed down for discerning extraordinary things, whether they come from a good or an evil spirit, are these:

1. It is a sign of the good spirit if all things from beginning to end are right and ordered, conformable to Catholic truth, to the morals of the saints and the practice of the Church, and impel to true virtue. If anything evil occurs, it is an indication of the evil spirit.

2. If a man is moved to the casting away of self-love, to self-denial, mortification in customary and daily actions, and tolerance of adversities, to conformity with the divine will, subjection of his own judgment, perfect obedience even against his own sense, humility, contempt of the world, flight from goods, it is a sign of the visitation of God; - on the contrary, if he is moved to a good opinion of himself, vain glory, contempt of others, and empty and idle manifestation of the communication received, or to other things which are contrary to the aforesaid virtues, they proceed from nature or from the evil spirit.

3. If the person does not desire extraordinary things, nor tend to exercises which move admiration, but judges himself unworthy of God's gifts, and hides his gifts, and does not will special things except that he may please God, indeed rejoices in contempt when the confessor judges the illustrations to be illusions, it is a sign of the good spirit; - on the contrary, if the suggestion tends to new, curious, singular, unusual things, or to extraordinary gifts but with inordinate or empty affection. Therefore those are deceived who pant after extraordinary things.

4. Divine motion is good in every part: in the beginning, in progress, in the end; an illusion of the devil, even if it seems to begin rightly, shortly ends in something depraved, whether by drawing back from a better good, or by insinuating something evil, or by disturbing the soul. Hence if the motion, although at the beginning it casts in reverential fear, afterward brings peace to the soul, illustrating the intellect with a new light of truth, enkindling the will with the sweet flame of divine love, it is a sign of the good spirit. On the contrary, if at the beginning it approaches pleasantly, but then leaves sorrow, disturbance, and darkness of soul, it is a sign of an evil spirit.

But from wherever the motion comes, let a man seriously and constantly intend to use it for advancing in the imitation of Christ, in abjection and humility; by this it will happen that if the motion comes from the devil, he himself, frustrated in his end and hope, will easily withdraw.

X. Corollaries concerning aspiration and preparation for the more eminent gifts of God, first of all contemplation and mystical life.[15] - From all that has been set forth above, the following conclusions are easily understood:

[15] Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange in the periodical *La Vie spirituelle*, t. V.

1. Special and miraculous liberalities or communications, which are said to draw away from faith because they consist in distinct pieces of knowledge, are not to be desired, because they are extraordinary and therefore provide a handle for vain glory, curiosity, and illusion, and because they are not necessary for perfection nor do they sanctify. Hence they are most constantly to be rejected, "yet always with a spirit of humility and without any contempt, and always protesting before God that one wishes to serve Him in pure faith."[16] For one act of charity is worth more than all visions.

[16] St. Alphonsus, *Pr. conf.*, n. 143.

2. The more eminent graces of the mystical life, as being uniform with faith and sanctifying, such as confused knowledges and divine touches which unite to God, are not to be rejected; hence of themselves it is licit to desire them and humbly seek them, especially by those persons who are already endowed with them, so that union with God may be perfected and love may receive new increases. For it is good for man and desirable to God, the ultimate end, to adhere to Him by the intellect through contemplation, and by the affection through excellent love. Hence he can also prepare and dispose himself for it, both by the progressive practice of affective prayer and recollection, and by the exercise of moral virtues by which the obstacles of contemplation are removed;[17] yet he cannot merit nor effect it.

[17] St. Thomas, II-II, q. 180, a. 2.

3. Nevertheless, for those persons who are not sufficiently prepared, it is safer only to desire perfection in general, and conformity to God's will; because they tend only altogether remotely to contemplation, but are not yet able to attain it.

4. Let the aspiration be pure, humble, discreet. Practically, it will be better to obey the Holy Spirit generously, to sweat with God's help in the works of perfection, never to judge oneself worthy of the grace of contemplation, so that if God should wish to raise one to contemplation, He may not find one unprepared.

5. The dispositions ordinarily required are enumerated: some at least confused and general knowledge of the contemplative life; - a strong soul; - silence and withdrawal; - mortification of body and spirit; - purity of heart; - simplicity of mind; - profound humility; - meditation; - study of acquiring the presence of God; - fervent charity.

6. Therefore very many moderns err who hold the graces of the contemplative and mystical life as extraordinary gifts, and consequently apply to them the rules which authors of the spiritual life hand down concerning these things. There is one spiritual life which begins from the purgative way, grows through the illuminative way, and is terminated in mystical union with God. To this all are called by a general and remote vocation; but by a proximate and individual vocation those who are found sufficiently disposed. Therefore that distrust which many nourish toward the mystical life is not legitimate.

Question III: Concerning Those Tempted

I. What temptation is. - The incitement of temptation is the common lot of men in the present life, from which not even the most perfect are altogether freed. Temptation is an incitement to sin, or toward a created good proposed to the will, by which it is allured or inclined to violate virtue or a precept. It can be light, grave, most grave, according as the force of moving is small, vehement, or most vehement for inciting the will. That force depends on the nature of the thing, on the vividness of the representation, and on the intensity of the appetite.

Temptation arises either from an intrinsic principle, namely from the corruption of nature, especially of the flesh, Jas. I, 14-15; or from an extrinsic principle: either by way of an object alluring externally,

and thus it is from the world, by whose temporal goods, that is, riches, honors and glory, or power, and pleasures and false principles man is allured to sinning; or by way of an agent which internally moves the imagination to representing evil and excites the appetite to a perverse motion of passion, so that reason and will may thus be drawn to evil, and in this way it is from the devil, although he can also appear externally, which nevertheless very rarely happens. Concerning these, cf. the treatise on Sins.

Temptations can be from ourselves, that is, from our evil concupiscence, and from the devil at the same time, and these temptations are more common. But if they exceed the customary passions of our powers, they are attributed to the devil alone and are preternatural; these occur more rarely.

Now it rather often happens that penitents are cast down in soul because of temptations which they frequently and vehemently suffer; these now must be taught the necessity of perpetual combat, the end and utility of temptations, and the manner of resisting them.[1]

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, I, q. 114, a. 2; II Sent. d. 21, q. 1, a. 1; in ep. ad Hebr. VI, 15, l. 3; Reuter, *Neo-conf.*, n. 244; Aertnijs, *Th. P.*, nn. 168-175; Marc, *Th. M.*, I, n. 378; Tanquerey, de Pecc., nn. 443-448; Lehmkuhl, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 629-632; Noldin, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 327-329; Prummer, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 385-389; Hense, *Die Versuchungen*. Likewise the theological inquiry *La Tentation*, by Fr. Masson in the periodical *La Vie spirituelle*, Nov. and Dec. 1923; Jan., Feb., July, Sept. 1924; Feb., March, April 1926.

II. Necessity of temptation. - The Scriptures teach the necessity of temptation, Job VII, 1; Eccli. II, 1; Tob. XII, 13. But the reason of this necessity is that God proposes immortal life both a) as a crown toward which we strive; but no crown is given without an opposing difficulty to be overcome; hence the Apostle, II Tim. II, 5: "No one will be crowned unless he has fought lawfully"; and b) as the reward of service for proving our fidelity: Deut. XIII, 3: "The Lord your God tempts you, that it may be made manifest whether you love Him or not with all your heart and with all your soul."

Therefore God tempts us or permits us to be tempted for proving fidelity, but not like the devil, for deceiving us and leading us into sin, according to Jas. I, 13.

III. Ends of temptation. - Therefore the ends or utilities on account of which God permits temptations are the good of His faithful and just ones, namely our good, and indeed manifold. For temptations:

1. give man knowledge of himself, show his fragility and need of divine help, and thus admonish him concerning humility, beat down his pride, and teach him both how much he ought to distrust himself and how much he ought to trust God;

2. teach him the envy of the devil, and to exercise continual vigilance and mortify the passions;

3. render him more fervent in the service of God, and free him from torpor and softness;

4. induce him into love of the heavenly fatherland, where there are no snares, nor struggles, but peace and full possession of life always going to endure;

5. join the soul to the faithful God, who does not permit one to be tempted above that which we can bear, but accommodates helps to temptations and with temptation makes the outcome of help, I Cor. X, 13, and thus raises one to confidence and hope of victory, and confers tranquility of soul; for grave temptations are rather a sign that we are in the friendship of God;

6. furnish testimony, increase, and consolidation of virtue, because by repeated strong and heroic acts the habit is increased and brought to perfection;

7. have an opportunity for satisfying for sins and for being purified from their remnants: for where a man indulged evil affections and delights, there they subject him to pains and afflictions;

8. enrich us with many and splendid crowns if we conquer, according to Jas. I, 12; Wis. III, 5; Apoc. III, 21; thus by increasing merit, they also increase future glory: for as often as we conquer, so often we shall be crowned;

9. instruct man, not only for himself, but also for others, Eccli. XXXIV, 9; and St. Gregory, *Mor.*, l. 23, c. 27;

10. finally they manifest more splendidly the divine attributes: power, mercy, wisdom which draws good from evil, justice which repays according to works.

IV. General means against temptations of whatever kind are humility, prayer, and fortitude. Humility removes the impediments of assisting grace: for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, Jas. IV, 6. Prayer obtains the helps of grace, Mt. VI, 13; Luke XI, 4. Fortitude uses them, removes pusillanimities, Phil. IV, 13; I Pet. V, 9, and presumptions, and takes care that someone not rashly expose himself to dangers.

From these the following general rules can be deduced for practice, to be suggested by the confessor to the penitent:

1. If temptation attacks you, repel it immediately from the beginning, lest, if it is negligently permitted to grow strong, it increase with such power that victory becomes very difficult. Therefore follow the prescription of the Lord: Pray that you enter not into temptation, and immediately flee to the mercy of God, confidently entrusting your infirmity to Him; or turn the soul to an honorable external occupation, or elicit an act of virtue, e.g., of charity or contrition, or of the opposed virtue.

2. Relying on divine help, be of great soul in temptations, mindful that you can do all things in God: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," Jas. IV, 7; Phil. IV, 13. For if the devil adverts you to be fainthearted, he will assail more, promising himself already the victory which great confidence in God would supply to the one tempted.

3. Beware altercation with the enemy: for altercation will increase the temptation, disturb the soul, and the enemy will wrap it in darkness.

4. Constantly exercise the virtue opposed to the temptation, by meditating on its beauty and the contrary baseness of the vice, and by increasing horror of the vice and esteem of the virtue.

5. Open especially troublesome temptations to the confessor or spiritual director: Satan hates nothing more than that his machinations not remain hidden; then God is accustomed to reward this act of humility by breaking temptations.

V. Diverse manner of fighting against temptations. - Since the genera of temptations are diverse, of which some cast in bitterness, others sweetly allure, the manner of fighting is also diverse. Against temptations of the former genus it profits to struggle not only defensively but also offensively, by seeking occasions of subduing them, e.g., anger, impatience, lust for vengeance, sloth, vain glory. But sweet temptations are conquered more safely by flight, that is, by calling the mind away, than by direct attack, e.g., against faith or chastity, so that they must be excluded from memory and their occasions removed. St. Thomas teaches this, II-II, q. 35, a. 1, ad 4: "Sin is always to be fled; but the attack of sin is sometimes to be overcome by fleeing, sometimes by resisting. By fleeing indeed, when continued thought increases the incentive of sin, as in lust, whence it is said, I Cor. VI, 18: flee fornication; but by resisting, when persevering thought removes the incentive of sin which comes from some light apprehension. And this happens in sloth: because the more we think concerning spiritual goods, the more pleasing they are rendered to us, from which sloth ceases."

Hence certain special rules can be established:

1. In temptations against chastity there is need of special caution lest you be disturbed or fear inordinately, and lest you apply the soul to baseness even for considering it, because thus you will increase the temptation; but immediately flee to God, to the wounds of Christ, to the last things, e.g., death and the punishments of hell, and apply the mind seriously and with all your powers to other honorable things, or even to external works and labors. But care must be taken that with a released soul you look upon Jesus, or upon one good idea, not the temptation; otherwise you increase it. It also helps to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, the Guardian Angel, St. Joseph, St. Thomas, St. Aloysius, etc. After the temptation, it is by no means expedient anxiously to ruminate whether you consented to it, since the temptation could easily return.

2. In the same manner one must act in temptations against faith, namely every disputation is to be avoided, every weighing of the suggestions of the enemy; but immediately flee to prayer, elicit a firm act of faith, propose to undergo death rather than deviate from the faith. If nevertheless the temptation continues to vex, and consists in empty ideas and lighter doubts, let it be entirely contemned. But if there are difficulties which seem to have something solid, let the confessor set forth to the tempted person the motives of credibility of our faith, such as the holy and undefiled doctrine, the swift diffusion through the whole world by poor fishermen, the prophecies fulfilled concerning it, so many miracles, and the blood of so many thousands of martyrs, and other things diverse according to diverse dispositions, which are arguments clearer than light and manifestly reveal it to be true. Besides, to cultivated persons the reading of some book treating of the truth of the faith can be commended.

3. He who is tempted by the spirit of vengeance a) should flee and turn the mind away from the injury or annoyance inflicted, and then b) when the temptation ceases, act directly against it and correct the apprehension by which an injury, often small, is apprehended as great. Let him think of the ignominies received by Christ and those which have been inflicted on God; let him remember fragility, excuse the neighbor as far as he can, or even pray for him.

4. If a temptation against hope and confidence is excited concerning predestination or the foreknowledge of God, either plainly neglect it as a trick of the devil, or say internally: mine is to serve God; to dispose future things is not mine but the Father's, who sent His Son that I may have life and may have it more abundantly. No one has hoped in Him and been confounded... If I knew that I was predestined, or if predestination were in my hand, what would it be fitting for me to do? This I will do, and I will live.

5. If a temptation against charity is present concerning your dispositions: What would you choose and do if you had to sin or tolerate this or that evil? turn your soul to other things and contemn this thought as idle, or internally say that in this case God will not abandon you, but will lavish upon you greater strength, which is lacking to you for the moment.

6. If especially pious persons are tormented by impious thoughts, blasphemous thoughts against God, imprecatory thoughts against the neighbor, obscene imaginations and movements even concerning images or sacred things, fears or even despair concerning salvation, let them altogether despise these, like scruples, and consider them nothing, so that they neither examine nor confess them, and placidly turn the mind elsewhere. For fear and attentive consideration increase and cause them.

VI. Signs of resistance or non-consent. - Signs by which it is discerned that someone did not consent to temptation, or at least not fully, are indicated by moralists: a) if someone, adverting or fully adverting to the temptation, immediately repels it; b) if, more fully adverting, he is immediately distressed or saddened; c) if, immediately when he is distressed, he still finds himself so habitually constituted that he would rather die than sin mortally; d) if he easily could have executed the sin and did not execute it; e) if a God-fearing man, or one who is accustomed to be so affected that he would rather die than expressly sin mortally, doubts whether he consented; f) if someone remembers that he proceeded very timidly and hesitantly; g) if he was half asleep, not fully in possession of himself, and judges that he would not have done it if he had been fully awake; h) if he doubts whether he was in possession of himself, awake, drunk.

In doubt: no consent or imperfect consent is presumed among God-fearing men and those who are accustomed to be so disposed that they would rather die than sin mortally; if they had consented perfectly, ordinarily they would not doubt. - On the contrary, perfect consent is presumed among those who are of more lax conscience and easily fall into some sin; if these had resisted the temptation better than they are accustomed, they would certainly have known that.

VII. Observations. - 1) Let the confessor not omit to suggest the aforesaid means to penitents, especially recidivists, lest he follow the example of those confessors for whom it is enough to have heard from the mouth of penitents that they no longer wish to sin, and, with no other speech interposed, they absolve them, Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, I, de Pecc., n. 238.

2. Let him teach penitents to distinguish three stages in the process of temptation: namely a) suggestion, or only the representation of evil in the imagination or even the intellect, a simple proposal of evil; b) indeliberate delight arising from the suggestion in the sensitive appetite, or even in the rational appetite, by which the temptation pleases, and sensible commotion and organic impression by which it is made pleasant; c) reason now adverting the malice, an act of

the free will: either dissent, by which it casts away and repels the temptation, or consent, by which directly or indirectly it takes complacence in the temptation itself or admits, approves, or retains it. Now sin is present only in consent; for this is not in the intellect alone, or in the sensitive appetite, or in the indeliberate and spontaneous inclination of the rational appetite, but in the free will alone, which deliberately and freely adheres to evil. Hence let the confessor say: to feel temptation or to be conscious of it is not sin, but to consent is, Council of Trent, sess. 5, can. 5; not sense or pleasantness, but consent and complacence.

It should be noted, however, that the devil can fashion a certain imagination of consent, even for merely spiritual temptations, as concerning blasphemy, contempt of God, etc., and affect the soul with a certain sense of complacence, so that the man seems to himself to have consented. This is discerned if, when he adverts, he immediately detests the temptation from the soul.

3. Nevertheless let the confessor admonish that it is illicit rashly to expose oneself to temptation without a just cause, which must be proportioned to the gravity of the temptation, that is, to the incitement and danger of sinning, considered not only absolutely and in itself, but also relatively for this or that man. And indeed:

a) to expose oneself to grave temptation or proximate danger of sinning is licit only if a grave reason is present and at the same time a founded hope of overcoming the temptation;

b) on the contrary it is a grave sin freely to expose oneself, without sufficient reason, to grave temptation and proximate danger of sinning;

c) for incurring light temptation and light danger a light reason suffices.

4. Let him admonish that before temptation vigilance is to be exercised, 1 Pet. V, 8; Mt. XXVI, 41, for forestalling them; for this a) occasions of sinning are to be fled; b) useless wanderings of soul and idlenesses are to be avoided, from which dangerous phantasms often arise; indeed c) the faculties of the soul and also the passions are to be positively turned toward good, useful, and religious things.

5. After the temptation has ended or been overcome, one must not indulge pride, but in humility thanks are to be rendered to God, by whose help we are able to report victory. - Let there not be instituted at length an examination concerning consent given or denied. - Nor is it ever expedient to collapse in soul, but confidently to flee to the mercy of God.

Question IV: Concerning the Scrupulous

I. Scruple is said metaphorically from *scrupus*, which is a rough little stone hidden in the shoe of one walking, yet bringing annoyance and impediment in walking; and therefore in morals it is a spiritual stumbling-block which impedes a man from proceeding with unoffending foot and free step in the way of truth and Christian practice. Hence an empty apprehension, and the fear and anxiety arising from it, that there is sin somewhere where there is none, or that it is greater than it is, is thus called. A certain mental obsession (*kwelgedachte*) and hyperesthesia of sin is accustomed to accompany this apprehension; and thus scruple is now a mental disease, and indeed of the moral order: a morbid

anxiety of soul concerning an obligation to be executed, or concerning sins committed or to be committed.

Therefore three elements are required for it: first, of the intellectual order, a futile reason which besets the mind and whose solution does not appear, arising indeliberately after the manner of a fixed idea, violently intruding itself, pertinaciously recurring; second, of the affective order, empty fear of sinning arising from this, which holds the attention fixed and impedes the will from turning the mind away from it and determining it to firm assent; third, the effect proceeding from both, agitation, disquiet, and disturbance of soul. It can concern the past, as if someone from a futile reason fears that he omitted some sin or circumstance in confession, that he examined himself insufficiently, that he consented to temptation; or concerning the present or future, as if someone from a similar reason fears that what he does or is going to do is sin.[1]

[1] Concerning scruples cf. Pitres and Regis, *Les Obsessions et les Impulsions*; P. Janet, *Les Obsessions et la Psychasthenie*; *les Nevroses*; Dr. Raymond, *Nevroses et Psychonevroses*; Eymieu, *Le Gouvernement de soi-meme*, 2nd vol.; Grasset, *Demi-fous et demi-responsables*; *Le Psychisme inferieur*; Gemelli, *De Scrupulis*; d'Agnel and d'Espiney, *Psychotherapie des troubles nerveux*; *Le Scrupule*. Likewise Scaramelli, *Directorium asceticum*; Reuter, *Neo-conf.*, nn. 255-274; Billuart, de Conscientia; St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 11-19; *Praxis conf.*, nn. 95-98; Raphael of St. Joseph, *Institutiones fundamentales Theologiae moralis*, de Conscientia; Durois, *L'Ange conducteur des ames scrupuleuses*; Pere Raymond, *Le Guide des Nerveux et des Scrupuleux*; Grimes, *Traite des Scrupules*; Beaudoin, *Tr. de Conscientia*; and other authors in this treatise, as Ballerini, Lehmkuhl, Theol. Mechl., Prummer, and Vermeersch; Leroux in the periodical *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, May, June, and Nov. 1912; Legrand in the periodical *Coll. Brugenses*, Nov.-Dec. 1922, March-April 1923.

II. Scrupulous conscience. - From what has been said it is now understood what scrupulous conscience in the proper sense is: namely, it is a dictate of the practical intellect founded on scruples; hence it is a conscience which with anxiety doubts, suspects, or probably thinks and fears, on account of light and contemptible reasons, that a work here and now to be placed is evil, when it is not, or that it is worse than it is, e.g., that it is mortal when it is venial.

Therefore from scrupulous conscience properly so called, or formed by scruples, must be distinguished:

a) scrupulosity, that is, a habit or state of so irrationally fearing sin, which nevertheless they often call, but in an improper sense, scrupulous conscience. For it is not conscience, that is, an actual judgment of the intellect, but a habitual disposition by which we are inclined and prone to scruples and to having a scrupulous conscience;

b) a conscience agitated by scruples, or tortured and vexed, which judges an act to be licit, although from light causes it fears somewhat and is anxious lest it be illicit: mere scruple or apprehension, imagination, and anxiety of itself is not conscience or a dictate of reason, but a shadow and likeness of conscience, and can remain while the judgment of a certain conscience despising scruples stands;

c) a fearful conscience, which reasonably with tranquility fears sin from filial fear by which it would not wish to offend God even in the least thing;

d) a tender or delicate conscience, which adverts and judges the smallest defects, but according to the norm of truth.

III. The signs and manifestations of a scrupulous conscience are: 1) pertinacity in the argumentation of one's arguments and in judgment, by which someone out of fear of sin acquiesces in the judgment of no one; - 2) on the contrary, timidity at the same time in conclusions, and therefore frequent

change in judgment from a light appearance, so that he is unable to pronounce definitively; and distrust of self, by which someone suspects defects either of the intellect in grasping or interpreting responses, or of words in proposing difficulties, or of memory in retaining counsels given or positive precepts, indeed or even of his own facts, so that he doubts concerning a door closed by himself, concerning a light extinguished, concerning hours recited, concerning Mass heard; - 3) desire of consulting books or asking new confessors; - 4) reflections, accusations, or impertinent, prolix, or repeated questions concerning several circumstances which were present in the action or could have been present, or concerning the response of the confessor; - 5) disturbed and inordinate manners and gestures in avoiding sins or handling affairs, and a manner as if coerced of rushing into an action concerning which he was anxiously inquiring, and as if blind of proceeding in external works; - 6) fear of sin in those things which by all are held as licit; - 7) excessive disquiet and anxiety concerning past actions, e.g., confession, recitation of the breviary, made with moral diligence, and consequently the will of repeating the same again and again; - 8) inconstancy and defect of firmness in the purpose of preserving peace, being silent concerning scruples, omitting a new inquiry into the matter, or simply obeying.

IV. Causes of scruples are all those things which weaken the nervous system and diminish the energy of the soul.

1. Internal causes: a) mediate on the part of the body: a melancholic disposition or temperament prone to suspecting evil and to sadness, which can also come from heredity or from a certain degeneration;[2] solitude or flight from every human conversation and recreation; and weakness of the head, even arising from immoderation in abstinences, vigils, and studies; or from a weak and infirm constitution, insufficient nutrition and disturbance of nutritive functions, depressing emotions, bodily disease gravely weakening, or also psychasthenia, which scarcely permits a more intense attention of the soul for forming an equitable judgment concerning practical matters;

[2] Melancholy is numbered among the causes because melancholics everywhere are sharp in talent and suspicious by nature, and tenacious of the things which they apprehend; thus they are prone to every suspicion of evil, wish to scrutinize even the smallest things, and with difficulty acquiesce in others; all these things predispose to scruples.

b) immediate on the part of the soul, whether in the intellect: subtlety of talent which easily finds reasons for doubting, or in all things seeks mathematical certitude; weakness of mind and defect of judgment, women are more often scrupulous than men; weakness and inconstancy of soul by which it follows vivid imaginations rather than mature judgment; - or in the affection: hidden pride tenaciously adhering to its own judgment; pusillanimity which does not know how to contemn fears and casts down the soul.

Therefore there is a twofold genus of the scrupulous: some are rather intellectual, others excessively sensitive and timid from a certain phobia. In each case there is a defect both 1) of practical judgment or prudence in estimating particular circumstances, and 2) of energy or fortitude, perseverance, or constancy of the will, which does not command the intellect to be content with practical certainty and certainty improperly so called, or does not moderate the imagination and sensitive appetite and thus does not move to a serene examination free from the influence of imagination and anxiety.[3]

[3] Some, such as Grasset and Leroux, reduce scruples to diseases of the will; nevertheless their first cause seems to be defect of practical judgment which precedes the exercise of the will. Grasset himself confesses: "The fixed idea takes over the will an unjust and undeserved dominion, uncoercible, irresistible, disproportionate, senseless." Moreover there does not seem to be a sickness of the will which does not depend on a mental sickness, since the act of the appetitive power follows cognition and is essentially proportioned to it. Cf. Vermeersch, *Th. M.*, I, n. 34, citing St. Thomas, I-II, q. 10, a. 1. But if sickness of practical judgment is called sickness of the will, the speech is not correct, but the question will be about the name.

2. External causes are: a) God, by not granting light or strength, permitting scruples as a punishment of sin, amendment of conscience, liberation from tepidity, exercise of humility, greater generosity of soul, exercise in virtue and confidence, horror of sin, increase of merit, mystical probation, etc.; or even on account of the good of others, that we may learn to direct the scrupulous;

b) the devil exciting scruples in the imagination and sensitive appetite for torturing the pious, especially by nourishing sadness, so that they become weary in virtue, seek external consolations until they are led to desperation concerning salvation, by which they decline to laxity, indeed to all vices, or even inflict death on themselves;

c) education too constricted or harsh, or too soft, conversation with the scrupulous and reading of rigid books, or of books treating of the moral matter, by one who does not know how to judge them rightly.[4]

[4] Concerning the distinction of scruples, whether they are from God, from the devil, or from the corruption of nature, see Reuter, o. c., nn. 258-260.

V. Harmful effects of scruples. - The harmful effects are many, and very great temporal and spiritual damages can come from scruples to which consent is given, from whatever cause they arise. And indeed:

1. in bodily life, agitation and anxiety attenuate the powers, exasperate the nerves, weaken and disturb the nervous system, and prepare the way for neurasthenia, hysteria, and other diseases;

2. in intellectual life, they disturb rectitude of judgment; indeed they lead to insanity if they are universal, to monomania if they turn about one object;

3. in social life, they diminish consideration of the neighbor, take away aptitude for exercising social relations authoritatively or mercifully, and render one gravely troublesome to others;

4. especially in spiritual life, they cause loss of time in attacking empty phantasms, negligence and inequality for the duties of state, dry up devotion and turn one away from prayer and reception of the sacraments, excite distrust toward God and pusillanimity of spirit, whence sadness, dejection of soul, and desperation arise, which sometimes leads to suicide or unbridled lust.

VI. Remedies of scruples are: 1. To remove or diminish their internal causes: melancholy and solitude by comforts and cheerful recreations; weakness of the head by the counsels of a wise physician; defect of judgment by practical instruction of conscience; pride by humility and submission of

judgment; inconstancy and weakness of soul by exercise and strengthening of the will; timidity and pusillanimity by meditation on the goodness of God and confidence in God, etc.

In species, intellectual scrupulous persons should be persuaded that in moral matters mathematical certitude is not to be sought, that attention is not to be given to all things which can happen, but only to those which likely occur, and that anxiety of the appetite is to be carefully discerned from the judgment or state of the intellect. But the timid should learn to act firmly in every matter, strongly neglect the anxiety which they experience in acting, trust in the goodness of the divinity, and keep in mind and often renew a firm purpose of sharp struggle against scruples.[5]

[5] Thus for strengthening the will; concerning this cf. Eymieu, who methodically describes the process of cure according to which 1) sensations not only sad but merely passive and emotional are to be avoided; 2) physiological care is to be instituted from the things sought: rest, sleep, distractions, placid tranquility without fatigue, and leaving behind the environment in which ordinary life is turned; 3) activity is to be exercised and the will educated by various means by which the scrupulous person learns to will, to consent, to attend to physical or intellectual labor, to apply efforts, and to will strongly, firmly, and constantly under uniform and unconquered discipline, *malgre tout*.

2. To avoid external causes, namely scrupulous persons or writings which are an occasion for them, and excess of intellectual labor.

3. To flee idleness and carefully apply oneself to labor, especially that which delights more, namely for avoiding empty thoughts.

4. To act with a great and mortified soul against scruples, repelling them as evil and harmful thoughts, especially indirectly, by contemning them and applying the soul to other things, and never consenting to them, not even once.

5. To act as other pious and God-fearing men act.

6. Especially: to obey the superior or confessor, who is to be chosen not as scrupulous, but prudent, even rather than holy, in a humble, blind, and perfect manner, and rather often to ask this obedience from God with great confidence; this is almost the only efficacious remedy.

VII. Special principles according to which the scrupulous are to be directed:

1. The scrupulous person cannot be ruled by his own judgment, because his reason is powerless for this; therefore nothing remains except that he be governed by the reason of others, e.g., of the superior or confessor, who should say that he is scrupulous and in what matter,[6] and that in this matter he can and must follow the judgment of the superior, and that by obeying he cannot sin, unless he is altogether certain both that sin is present and that the judgment of the superior cannot be applied here and now; indeed even if he is certain, or if he says that he everywhere has evidence of obligation and sin, provided it is established that he is so scrupulous that phantasy fashions for him that he is certain. For although by acting thus the scrupulous person may sometimes err, nevertheless he will not sin by reason of the obedience which he owes to the superior or confessor.

[6] For in other matters he is rather often lax. "From pusillanimity it follows that someone is drawn back from works of virtues on account of fear of sinning. Indeed sometimes for avoiding light sins he is carried to graver ones. This happens especially to one laboring under a scrupulous conscience concerning a special matter, for example concerning the recitation

of the Hours, celebration of Mass, etc. For often other things are reputed as nothing, and with a scrupulous conscience a lax one is nourished. It is no wonder, since they proceed from the same root, namely from smallness and lightness of soul; e.g., not rarely it happens that one who anxiously repeats the words of consecration does not care concerning the cleanliness of vessels or corporal, nor look to other duties of his office." Beaudoin, *Tr. de Conse.*, q. 4.

Namely the presumption stands for the confessor as for the superior, who must be obeyed unless it is certainly established that he errs in prescribing a rule and cannot impose such a rule, and that obedience is illicit. And the scrupulous person can follow such a universal rule, as morally altogether necessary to his sound life, even if from this in a particular case error or material sin can follow. That effect can be considered as accidental and legitimately permitted on account of a proportionate cause. For he has the right of applying efficacious means which of themselves are honorable for being healed.

2. The scrupulous person easily exaggerates or fears sin; hence with him a grave doubt, which in others would be reasonable, "that in the case sin is present," is judged empty and to be spurned; and a light doubt "that in the case there is not sin" is judged founded.

Let him not carefully examine these doubts so that he may arrive at certitude: for he cannot arrive at this, and no one is bound to the useless. Hence he must be told that he can act freely unless he is altogether certain that sin is present; indeed if he is certain, provided it is established that he is so scrupulous in this or that matter that phantasy fashions for him that he is certain.

3. A positive obligation, namely of an affirmative precept, e.g., of confessing sins integrally, examining conscience, saying the Hours, making fraternal correction, does not oblige with great inconvenience; hence the scrupulous person can more easily be exempted from it.

VIII. A scrupulous conscience is not a rule of acting prudently, both because it is uncertain and because it is vincibly erroneous; but it is to be put aside, at least by a judgment from indirect principles handed down by the confessor, e.g., in the following manner: Whatever may be the case concerning the material liceity or illicitness of this action, it is certain that in such doubts one must obey the confessor; that I can and must act as the confessor said; that I can neglect my doubt or judgment; that by obeying I cannot sin, etc. But in the case such a doubt or such an apprehension is present. Therefore...[7]

[7] You will find this proposed among theologians in various formulas. Thus, for example, Lessius: "Although I, as regards myself, would rather judge this to be sin, nevertheless because my confessor says the contrary, I can and will do this which he told me, since he is for me the interpreter of the divine will." And Reuter, o. c., n. 263, remedy 2: "Although I judge this to be sin, nevertheless because my judgment is fallible, and the confessor told me that this is licit for me, I can and will do what he told me must be done, and I am certain that I do well, because God wills that I obey him"; and remedy 7: "In rightly forming conscience there is no difficulty or danger. Only think: 1) that it is the will of God that I contemn scruples; theologians indicate this to me..., my confessor who bears the place of God; but by following the will of God I cannot sin, and if it should happen that I erred materially, this cannot be imputed, since I follow directors given by God. 2) Besides, by yielding to scruples I harm body and soul, I render myself inept for God's service and become burdensome to the neighbor: I will live in perpetual torture... God does not oblige me to these things. For what brings excessive difficulty is morally impossible, nor does God oblige to it... 3) What I see prudent and upright persons do or contemn as trifles, this is licit also for me; I see prudent and upright persons do this or contemn it as trifles; therefore, etc."

Hence, although to act against a scrupulous conscience is not licit, nevertheless one can act against scruples; indeed, lest he incur grave damage, sometimes he is bound to do so even under grave

obligation. Not indeed if he remains in full doubt, for to act with a doubtful conscience is illicit, but provided that he in some way puts this aside and forms for himself a certain conscience, by judging, e.g., from the judgment of the confessor, that it is a scruple and by contemning it. For a scruple, because it is an empty apprehension of phantasy, does not render the doubt serious, and does not impede the judgment of conscience previously formed from being practically certain. Lessius, *de Prud.*, c. 1, n. 2, is to the point:

"Prudence is not always able to exclude scruple totally. For this often perseveres with the judgment of prudence; nevertheless in order that then the judgment be prudent, it must be reputed a scruple, and thus prudence also in a certain way excludes the scruple. For although the imagination of sin perseveres with a certain anxiety, nevertheless through prudence it is reputed a shadow, not truth."

But one need not always actually remember the principles and rules handed down above and by them form for oneself an actual dictate concerning the honesty of the action, because this is often morally impossible for the scrupulous person. As St. Alphonsus says, *Th. M.*, l. I, n. 19:

"Nor is there need that in each particular act he form this judgment... for it is enough that from the judgment once formed he act against the scruple; because on account of past experience that judgment exists virtually or habitually in his conscience, although obscured by darkness. Moreover while the scrupulous person operates in that confusion, often he does not operate with scruple or deliberate fear, for ordinarily he would not wish to omit what he knew to be pleasing to the divine will."

From this certain conclusions for practice can be noted with Fr. Vermeersch, *Th. mor.* I, n. 382:

1. After he has been admonished by the confessor concerning scruples, the consents which he says he has given, whether into an interior depraved suggestion, or into a purpose here and now of acting even if it is evil, or into a purpose of sinning, are to be ascribed to the phantastic order. For the scrupulous person imagines himself to say: I will this, or: thus I will do, whether it is good or evil, or I will sin and then expiate the sin by confession. But phantasy represented an assent of this kind to him, so that he seemed to himself as if to behold himself thus acting. Nevertheless, not otherwise than in a dream, he gave no free consent to those suggestions or purposes; and perhaps he made this use of the foreseen confession, that from it he might become more courageous for acting against scruples. Therefore for the scrupulous person who, e.g., from the counsel of the confessor, knows habitually that his doubts must be contemned by himself, it is lawful to act while the scruple remains. For that knowledge provides him a certain conscience...

2. It can happen that in the process of his doubts and little reasonings the scrupulous person labors for a long time, and is thus wearied and disturbed from the struggle, so that he rushes into the action in a blind manner: then he is deprived of true liberty necessary at least for sinning gravely.

3. Similarly, promises, vows, and blasphemies which some imagine they have often, indeed almost daily, made or said can be held as fictitious. Let the confessor simply refuse to hear or esteem these things.

4. Although the obligation of acting against scruples can be grave, since from them grave damage can be feared in spiritual progress, abandonment of spiritual exercises, desperation, suicide, or in nervous depression and health of body or mind, nevertheless the scrupulous person scarcely incurs subjective fault provided that with his infirm will he wishes to strive against scruples in general; indeed often it is not expedient to insist, lest a new disturbance and perplexity arise, and danger of desperation, which is especially to be feared in the sensitive.

IX. Applications. - There is especially a threefold class of the scrupulous:

1. Some are distressed by depraved thoughts concerning faith, chastity, charity, e.g., from rash judgment or a sense of aversion, or concerning future things to be done under condition, or by blasphemies internally uttered, to which they often fear that they have assented.

It must altogether be imposed on them a) that they not fight directly against these thoughts, e.g., by eliciting an act of faith, etc.; for this would excite them more and would be a great inconvenience; but b) that they despise scruples, because not depraved thoughts but only consents, not fictitious consents but only voluntary ones, are sin; and c) that they not examine themselves concerning them or write them on paper; indeed d) it can fittingly be imposed that they abstain from confessing them unless they knew with such certainty that they had consented that they could swear it. For the very fear of consent is a sign of resistance or of non-consent.

2. Others are anxious concerning duties already fulfilled:

A. Either on account of the integrity or contrition of past confessions. To these, if they have sometimes made a general confession or for a notable time have diligently made confessions, it must be imposed that they no longer think of all these things nor speak a word in confession, unless they continue to fear and can affirm these three things without any doubt, even with an oath: that the sin certainly was committed, that in their mind when they committed it it was mortal, and that they certainly forgot it. But if they do not immediately affirm or swear, they are no longer to be heard; and even if they swear, they are not on that account to be believed.

B. Or concerning the hearing of Mass or the recitation of the Hours. To these it must never be permitted to hear another Mass or to repeat the Hours, or a part.

C. Moreover, those who suffer perpetual and grave anxieties concerning these things, on account of the great inconveniences of scruples, are excused from material integrity of confession or of the Hours, so that they are not held to spend more time on the Hours than is customarily spent by upright men, and can omit the rest; indeed also sometimes part or the totality of the office could be prohibited to them, or a determined space of time assigned, or recitation suspended for a time.

B. Likewise some are scrupulous concerning duties to be fulfilled:

a) Concerning the integrity or contrition of confession to be instituted. To these there must be imposed a moderate examination of conscience, or even the time of examination must be determined, accusation concerning a few points or concerning external sins alone, and the simple recitation of the act of contrition.

b) Concerning fraternal correction. These must suppose themselves not to be held to it, unless they are altogether certain.

c) Concerning the intention of Mass, of the Hours, of a Sacrament, etc. These can elicit no intention, but begin absolutely and materially, and continue without hesitation and delay, without haste, strain of the head, or anxious solicitude: the very fear that the intention has been lost or not renewed is a certain sign that the intention is present; - moreover, there is not required the intention of satisfying, but of saying the office, hearing Mass, etc.; and it is as if impossible that one using reason would not have such an intention.

d) Concerning Holy Communion. Let them approach it with certitude that they would not sin even if they were in the state of sin; indeed then accidentally they would obtain grace.

In all these matters moderate diligence is to be employed.

3. Others fear sinning in every action.

On these it must be imposed

a) that they act freely, without deliberation and according to the first glance, despise scruples and operate against them where evident sin does not appear, indeed even against evidence if they were so scrupulous that phantasy fashioned for them that they had such evidence;

b) and it must be prescribed that they conquer scruples, lest they become insane or altogether useless for acting;

c) and concerning such actions in confession let them abstain from accusing themselves: for although they can sometimes err, nevertheless they do not sin, by reason of the obedience which they owe to the confessor.

But if they fear sin only in a certain genus, let the same hold for this genus.

X. Admonitions for the confessor. - 1) Before the confessor treats a penitent as scrupulous, let him inspect with great circumspection whether he is truly scrupulous: for there are those who are anxious concerning many things, but not without a just and reasonable cause, e.g., concerning restitution because they proceeded laxly; concerning past confessions because they approached without due preparation; concerning past sins which they wish more to expiate, as in new converts; concerning grave sins committed for the first time or as recidivists and not yet confessed; concerning lighter sins in which from tenderness of conscience someone now does not wish to offend God, etc.

2. When he has recognized him as scrupulous, let him seek perfect obedience, asking the penitent whether he trusts him and wishes constantly to obey him in all things; otherwise let him send him away.

3. Let him carefully examine in what matters the penitent is scrupulous: for ordinarily because of defect of judgment he is scrupulous in some matters, but rather lax in others; and therefore also to be treated partially as lax. Hence let him tell him that he is scrupulous, and in what matter; for a scrupulous person who persuaded himself that he was not scrupulous is incurable.

4. Let him try to know the cause of the scruples, that he may remove it, after the manner of a physician who first investigates the disease and its cause before he applies medicines.

5. That the scrupulous may obey more easily, let him try to win their confidence by fatherly long-suffering; therefore let him sympathize with their miseries with great kindness, act with them in much patience, and show that he has theological knowledge and competent knowledge of scruples. Generally they are to be treated with gentleness and mildness, especially if they are sensitive, but nevertheless with firmness; and they are not to be rebuked except because of disobedience, and, if necessary, strongly and with severity and rigor, e.g., by depriving them of communion, yet not excessively. On this point, namely, they are to be treated as if they were not scrupulous. But if they are altogether unwilling to obey, let the confessor dismiss them and send them to another, saying that he can no longer procure their good.

6. Let him inculcate the reasons why one must act against scruples, e.g., the dangers to which the scrupulous person exposes himself: of losing peace, wasting time, neglecting serious care of spiritual progress, remaining destitute of all fortitude, causing annoyance to others by his moroseness and becoming unfit for labors useful to the neighbor; and the other things set forth above.

7. Let him show firmness of countenance and speech to the scrupulous, and respond without any hesitation, and hand down a few general rules, without many particular distinctions; for otherwise they will always doubt that these rules hold for the occurring case. Let the response be clear, distinct, and brief. Let him not be prolix in explaining counsels, lest among the alleged motives something less solid be found; let him always say the same thing; nor let him render the reasons for the response, because they will inquire and doubt concerning their value, and thus they will be led not by another's judgment but by their own. Let him abstain from repeating the exposition which they made of their difficulty, lest diversity be detected; nor let him inquire much concerning the circumstances of scruples as if they had importance. Nor let him permit them often to have recourse to him, or to consult many others or books, or to consign to writing declarations made to them.

8. Sometimes let him gently mock the penitent when he proposes unfounded doubts; and let him order him to think what he himself would wish to respond if he were asked concerning such a thing by another, and let him tell him to do the very same.

9. Let him gradually lead him to solving his cases by himself, forbidding him to propose doubts more often, but, for example, once in a week or in a month, and not to recite more than two or three; suggesting that he act in the manner in which he would judge others to act. Let the scrupulous person cast away every manner which others hold as ridiculous.

Question V: Concerning the Lax

I. What lax conscience is. - Much more numerous than the scrupulous are found in this world, alas, those who labor under a more lax conscience. But lax conscience properly is that which doubts, suspects, or probably thinks, on account of light and contemptible reasons, that an act here and now

to be placed, though evil, is not evil, or is less evil than it is, e.g., venial when it is mortal. Hence it is as if moral anesthesia.[1]

[1] Theologians have few things concerning the lax, especially in the treatise on Conscience. Before others Haine, Raphael of St. Joseph, Beaudoin, Prummer can be seen; likewise Legrand in *Coll. Brug.* 1923.

It is called a) properly; for lax conscience is often said improperly for the habitual disposition which inclines to more lax judgments and to having a lax conscience;

b) doubts, suspects, or probably thinks: for if it judges certainly, then it now becomes a conscience simply erroneous, although this could have arisen from preceding laxity;

c) on account of light reasons that an evil act is not evil...: this is its proper object by which it is distinguished from every other positively doubtful and probable conscience, indeed also from a scrupulous conscience;

d) an act here and now to be placed: thus it is distinguished from a consequent lax conscience which judges an act placed.

II. Lax conscience is threefold: a) simply such, which leans on an opinion slightly or doubtfully probable, or applies more benign reflex principles too frequently and wrongly; it arises from defect of attention, rather often voluntary, and from lightness of soul;

b) cauterized, I Tim. IV, 2, which makes even very grave sins nothing and reputes evil as good without any remorse, Is. V, 20, and arises from gross ignorance and a long-lasting habit of sinning. For thus, from perverse morals, the moral sense can be obscured so that man does not abhor even grave sins, but drinks iniquity like water, Job XV, 16. This conscience is opposed at once to the fearful and the scrupulous, so that the fearful conscience holds the middle between the cauterized and the scrupulous.

c) pharisaic, so called from the Pharisees straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel. This makes great things, e.g., duties of state, internal things, things of the natural law, small, and makes small things, e.g., works of supererogation, external things, things of positive law, great, Mt. XXIII, 24. It often arises from malice, and is opposed at once to the tender and the narrow conscience, so that the tender mediates between the pharisaic and the narrow.

III. The conjectural signs by which a lax conscience is discerned and its difference from a scrupulous conscience are enumerated by Lacroix, *Th. M.* l., n. 526, from Stoz, *Tribunal Poenitentiae*, n. 223:

1. He is lax who spurns and holds as nothing those things which others commonly think are sins; but he who fears those things which others hold as nothing is scrupulous.

2. He who generally does not believe preachers and confessors, but judges their reproofs to be immoderate exaggerations, is lax; but he who does not believe confessors or other learned and upright men excusing the fact is scrupulous.

3. He who, trusting in his own judgment, is accustomed to proceed with no one consulted, is lax; but he who, even in clear matters, or concerning which he has elsewhere received a resolution, asks again and again, wishing through this to render himself more secure, is scrupulous.

4. He who in confessing is in no way solicitous about expressing the species or number of sins is lax; but he who confesses all things doubtfully and hesitantly, repeating the same thing rather often, saying now this number, now that number, or a different circumstance, and never satisfies himself, is scrupulous.

5. He who precipitately and without any consideration does whatever, is lax; but he who proceeds so hesitantly in all things that he does not trust the common doctrine of theologians, but always seeks evidences and demonstrations, is scrupulous.

6. He who quickly and vaguely hurries through any prayers, interrupts them without cause, looks around while praying, or talks, is lax; but he who prays anxiously, rather often stops in order to have attention, repeats the same things, is scrupulous; and so concerning other matters.

From these things it follows that a lax conscience is found even among the pious, at least in light matter, e.g., if they make certain light sins nothing, or act precipitately and without consideration in whatever they do, or are accustomed to proceed trusting in their own judgment with no one consulted, etc., cf. the things said under 1, 3, and 5.

Specifically, in confession a penitent is to be judged of lax conscience if there is discerned:

a) an evidently insufficient accusation, such as ordinarily exists among those who on the occasion of annual confession say that they have committed no evil, neither theft nor homicide, or confess only a few distractions in praying, or even certain similar things;

b) absence of remorse of conscience and delay of confession until some external circumstance as if compels one to confess;

c) defect of all sorrow concerning the sins declared, as among those who seem rather to defend their sins than accuse them, who distracted and insensible hear the exhortations of the confessor, who by certain little reasonings try to persuade themselves that God is too good to condemn to hell for omission of Mass or for meats eaten.

But if by these or other signs set forth above the confessor recognizes a lax conscience: 1) he cannot simply trust such a lax penitent who recognizes himself guilty of no grave sin, but by suitable questions, as far as possible, let greater integrity of confession be procured; 2) where he accuses himself doubtfully concerning consent, he is to be presumed to have consented, otherwise he would not doubt but would be certain that he did not consent, or he would in no way remember; 3) above all, contrition is to be inculcated to him.

IV. Several causes of lax conscience are enumerated, which on the part of the intellect are reduced to vincible ignorance, and on the part of the appetite to perversity of will. For the most part they are:

1. depraved or neutral education, which is unequal to establishing the difference of good and evil and inculcating the true sense of obligation; and familiarity with vicious persons, to whose morals we become accustomed and with whose sentiments we are joined;

2. defect of consideration and counsel in ordering the moral life, whence by use, in an external and mechanical manner, good works are done rather than from love of good and hatred of evil;

3. a soft life which enervates the soul and causes lightness of soul, or defect of moral discipline in the will, which is acquired only through the practice of mortification and self-denial;

4. vehement inordinate passions, especially in youth, by which reason is obscured and easily judges licit what we desire too much, e.g., anger, ambition, cupidity, empty glory, sensual pleasure, especially lust, by which it happens that the animal man does not perceive the things which are of the Spirit of God. Thus, for example, motions of anger seem nothing other than pious indignation, unbridled ambition nothing other than noble emulation, avarice is held as legitimate providence, commercial frauds are judged a display of industry, pleasure an honorable or necessary recreation, etc.;

5. excessive solicitude for temporal things, which makes us earthly, in mature age;

6. life immersed for a long time in vices, or the custom of sinning;

7. presumptuous confidence in God, from which arises neglect of prayer, examination of conscience, confession, which altogether casts down the soul and leaves it fasting from spiritual food;

8. tepidity of soul.

V. The effects of a lax conscience are: a) in the intellect: blindness of mind, dullness of sense, foolishness or blind tranquility after sin;

b) in the will: hardness of heart or insensibility to pious admonitions, so that scarcely by any means can it be moved;

c) mockery of pious exercises;

d) obduration in evil and final impenitence, Rom. II, 5.

VI. A lax conscience is not a rule of acting prudently, but is to be put aside: a) because it is uncertain; b) moreover it arises from rashness or ignorance which is voluntary, or at least cannot remain involuntary while the doubt arising on account of light reasons is seriously examined; c) besides, it is dangerous and is accustomed to have harmful effects, because it casts the soul into the broad way which leads to perdition, Mt. VII, 13, whence ordinarily it increases the danger of sinning mortally or of persevering in sin; and therefore, other things equal, even more than a scrupulous conscience, it is to be guarded against and amended.

But if it is not put aside, the agent sins in that species and gravity of sin which he knows himself to commit or to the danger of which he exposes himself, as theologians teach concerning conscience vincibly erroneous and uncertain; and indeed he sins as often as at least confusedly he adverts the insufficiency of the reasons on which he leans and voluntarily neglects to apply means apt for forming a right conscience, and thus exposes himself to the danger of sinning. - Indeed he can sin gravely even in a light matter, if his rashness, with any dictate whatever omitted or contemned, impels him to acting, so actually disposed that, if he adverted the action to be gravely evil, he would nevertheless place it.

VII. Remedies. - A lax conscience is to be put aside by true faith and purification of heart, profession and exercise of true religion. Hence the remedies are the study of reflection or greater consideration, and the attack upon tepidity; in species:

1. a spiritual retreat for some days, by which the soul may be vacant to God and to itself, Hos. II, 41;

2. daily discussion of conscience concerning the acts of the present day, Is. XLVI, 8;

3. devout and assiduous prayer and meditation on the last things, Eccli. VII, 40, and frequent reading of pious books;

4. diligent confession after sin, lest the soul harden in sin, and inquiry concerning means from the confessor;

5. removal of causes, e.g., flight from the wicked and conversation with the good, Prov. XIII, 20.

Specifically a) habitually let the lax person beware of his first estimation concerning the morality of his acts, so that he resists his own laxity and learns to rectify his conscience;

b) when doubt has arisen concerning the liceity or gravity of an action to be placed, let him not spurn it as empty, but diligently examine;

c) while doubt stands concerning the gravity of an action placed, let him not approach Holy Communion unless he has confessed.

But if he seriously strives to amend his conscience, with great patience and meekness he is to be animated to confidence and perseverance; and if he relapses, sometimes he will be excused from grave offense on account of precipitation in acting, in which case he will have to be exhorted to greater vigilance, that he may proceed more cautiously and learn also to avoid this.

VIII. Warning. - According to the principles set forth above, the confessor must instruct and admonish the penitent who labors under a lax conscience: 1) if such a conscience, as often happens, is vincible and gravely culpable; 2) even outside grave fault, if fruit from the admonition is hoped; 3) even if fruit is not hoped, while it is harmful either to the penitent, who, with laxity growing heavier, could suffer total extinction of the moral sense, or to others, because it would cause notable scandal of the neighbor or public evil.

Question VI: Concerning the Worldly

I. By the worldly are not understood here those who bid farewell to honorable and Christian life, being totally given to the age, but those who, wishing to lead the Christian life at least as to substance, nevertheless indulge the worldly spirit and delight in the pleasures of the age, if they are not altogether depraved. In one word, those who so attempt to worship God that nevertheless they do not offend the world. Such are those who desire to see, taste, and read all things, and rather often lead a comfortable, idle, and pleasure-loving life. For these, special attention must be given to festivities, specifically dances, in whose pleasure they delight; to spectacles which they frequent to see; to books and periodicals which they read.[1]

[1] Concerning these, St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction a la Vie devote*, 2nd p., ch. 32; St. Alphonsus, *Th. M.*, III, tr. 4, nn. 426-429; Aertnijs, *Th. M.*, II, nn. 322-324; 325-327; 328-331; Marc, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 829-893; 834-836; 451 sqq.; Haine, *Th. M.*, I, de Pecc., qq. 103 and 104; Th. Mechl., de Poen. (4), n. 85, III and IV; Ballerini, de Sexto, nn. 47-61; Genicot, *Th. M.*, I, nn. 241, 242, 240; Noldin, *Th. M.*, III, nn. 435 and 436; II, n. 698 sqq., can be compared.

II. Dances among persons even of different sex, according to themselves, that is, depraved circumstances excluded, are not dishonorable but indifferent things, because of themselves they are acts not of lust but of joy and art; in practice, however, they are dangerous and rather often an occasion of sinning. From three especially important circumstances they can become gravely dishonorable:

a) From a depraved end, for instance of indulging lust, e.g., for procuring venereal delights for oneself, exercising malicious or base touches, or having base conversations; this especially happens in masked dances, *bals masques*, in which, no longer restrained by the rein of shame, they do what they would not dare to do if known.

b) From grave danger of sinning mortally, e.g., by reason of dress, words, gestures, contact, songs, and other circumstances, even before or after the dances, when young men lead girls home; especially by reason of the manner of dancing, e.g., with the breast of the woman pressed closely opposite the breast of the man, so that the woman is as if in the hands of the man. All these things dispose to carnal commotions; nevertheless this is not necessarily dishonorable, as is established from the testimony of those dancing and is understood from the fact that the mind is distracted to many other things and has need of attending to rhythmic motions, waltz, galop, schottische, mazurka, cotillion, etc.[2]

[2] Cf. *Dict. de Theol.*, art. Danse.

c) From grave scandal, whether direct, because young men by conversations, embraces, touches directly solicit girls to sin, or indirect, when either the manner of dancing is indecent in itself or has a sufficiently open amorous and impure signification, as in modern dances, e.g., tango, fox-trot, one-step, shimmy, boston, blues, samba, charleston, etc., from which signification or indecency they can scarcely be freed;[3] - or women, whether where there is not a custom, or where there is a custom, in an excessively exaggerated manner, uncover the breast immoderately, so as thus to provoke to lasciviousness; with greater reason, if they walk naked or almost naked.

[3] Thus is the common judgment concerning contemporary dances of ecclesiastical authority, e.g., the Archbishop of Paris; the bishops of Belgium, 1914; Benedict XV, 6 Jan. 1921; Council of Mechlin, n. 59, and of lay persons who still have care concerning the moral matter; concerning this see Jose Germain, *Danseront-elles?* The following can usefully be compared: Vuillermet, *Les catholiques et les danses nouvelles*; *la Vie diocesaine*, May 1922; *N. Revue Theol.* 1924, p. 32; Kiselstein in *Rev. Eccl. de Liege*, Sept. 1924; Stanvaert in *Coll. Gand*, March 1925; A. Janssen, *Les Danses modernes*.

But if dances are an occasion of sinning lightly, they are lightly dishonorable.

Hence: 1) if the grave danger which dances bring is proximate and no grave cause is present for going to them, they are to be avoided under mortal sin, because the occasion is free;

2. if grave danger is proximate and at the same time a grave cause excuses, such as a grave offense of husband, parents, or brothers, a public office compelling one to assist, vigilance to be exercised over a spouse, light or no sin will be present, because the occasion is morally necessary, provided nevertheless that one intend an honorable end, not himself do

dishonorable things, and fortify himself against the danger with due cautions by which the occasion becomes remote;

3. if the danger is remote or light, he who commits himself to it from a reasonable cause can be excused from every sin. Such causes are accustomed to be custom, the end of relaxing the soul once or another time in the year, of more easily finding an occasion of marriage, of not displeasing a husband or suitor, of satisfying neighbors or friends inviting to dances, of not exposing oneself to mockery, etc.

The danger cannot be defined by a general norm, but in individual cases must be judged according to circumstances, especially from the experience of each one, also from circumstances:

a) there are circumstances so dishonorable that regularly they are for all a proximate occasion of sinning: then they are to be held as such, unless a special reason demonstrates that this occasion is absent for someone;

b) on the contrary that which generally is not a proximate occasion can be an occasion for some very infirm individual, and a sin, unless he is so fragile that he everywhere sees an occasion of sinning;

c) much more dangerous are accustomed to be public dances which are held in taverns among persons of every kind than those which are held in private houses: for external sins are accustomed to occur more rarely in honorable society;

d) indeed the custom of frequently going to public dances will rarely be without proximate occasion;

e) nor are dances of boys and girls to be praised. For even if concupiscence is presumed absent, they are good only for fostering the worldly spirit of vanity and are a danger to innocence.

III. The duty of the confessor. - a) The first will be to turn all away from dances, or at least from their frequency, as much as he can, especially parents and girls, to whom it should be inculcated that they are opposed to the Christian spirit, as fostering sensualism, and are not necessary for marrying: gently nevertheless, rather by persuading indirectly than by threatening directly. To this can be applied the things said by St. Augustine concerning drunkenness: "These things are taken away not sharply, not harshly, not imperiously, but more by teaching than by ordering, more by admonishing than by threatening," St. Thomas, II-II, q. 150, a. 1, ad 4.

b) To the penitent wishing to go to dances, let the confessor weigh the danger of the penitent by asking for what end he wishes to go; whether he has already several times sinned because of dances, or at least was subjected to grave movements of lust; by inquiring concerning circumstances of manner, time, place, persons, e.g., of what sort those dances are accustomed to be, whether immodest gestures intervene in them, whether kisses are demanded, whether it is a simple running about without acts of this kind; likewise whether scandal is not to be feared for him or another, for one or for several in particular.

c) But if he cannot persuade, let him take care to diminish the danger by admonitions and safeguards, e.g., that the penitent set before himself an honorable end; preserve modesty, especially in dress, gesture, and speech; yield in no way to vicious sympathies, whether of others toward himself or of himself toward others; after the dance close the entrance to depraved imaginations.

d) The confessor cannot deny absolution, unless it is a proximate occasion of sinning or the manner of dancing is altogether base.

e) Yet he can act more severely with those who introduce dances somewhere, or a new dishonorable manner of dancing or of dressing oneself, or alone preserve them, or without sufficient reason permit them at home, or otherwise cooperate with them; or with innkeepers who admit dishonorable dances. In all these things, nevertheless, let him always proceed with great prudence.

IV. Spectacles, like dances, of themselves are not evil nor illicit, because honorable and moderate play contains nothing evil in itself, II-II, q. 168, a. 3; today, however, most spectacles which are exhibited in public theaters are gravely evil:

a) either because they are notably base, whether because of obscene things which are represented, or because of women immoderately uncovered, especially if they are looked at with telescopic spectacles, or because of dances which, inserted between scenes, ballets, are dishonorable because of quasi-nudity, lascivious gesticulations, and immodesty of the dancers;

b) or because they are notably contrary to faith and religion, which they hand down as tyrannical and bloody, an enemy of science and progress, ridiculous, false, superstitious, inept, etc., or they direct these things against priests and religious whom they exhibit as given to base dealings;

c) or because they are notably contrary to the moral law, while they contemn virtues as vile and extol vices and offenses, e.g., vengeance, homicide, suicide, adultery, divorce, neo-Malthusianism, vices of the flesh, certain modes of injustice, etc. But if they are not notably impious or base, or only in passing have something contrary to religion or gravely obscene, they will be lightly dishonorable.

Hence to be present at spectacles can be a mortal sin from three circumstances:

1. from a depraved end, whether of satisfying lust or impiety;

2. from proximate danger of perversion in faith or morals;

3. from grave scandal of evil example. And therefore not only the following sin gravely:

a) those who compose depraved spectacles, or

b) those who exhibit them, namely directors and actors; but also

c) those who foster them by applause or subscription, at least if without these they would not have place;

d) those who attend them indiscriminately or permit their own to attend, unless a grave cause excuses under due cautions.

Therefore similar rules hold as for dances: 1) If the danger is grave or a proximate occasion of mortal sin, only a grave cause can excuse, and indeed under fitting cautions by which the danger becomes remote. A sufficient cause will be prudent fear of notable damage, such as long-lasting indignation of husband, parents, master; a public office compelling attendance; the necessity of watching over a spouse; necessity or great utility of knowing these things; not however a mere command, nor loss of the price paid for entrance, nor a philanthropic end.

2. If the danger is not grave but remote, from a reasonable cause it is licit to attend, such as not only comfort and recreation, but, for example, the will of the husband, command of parents, reason of service in those who must accompany a master, reason of utility of knowing these things, propriety of state.

3. If someone attends evil spectacles on account of curiosity and empty comfort, danger and scandal having been excluded, he sins venially.

The danger is to be judged from experience and circumstances:

a) there are spectacles so impious or dishonorable that regularly they are a proximate occasion of sin for all; then they are to be held as such unless someone is most firm in faith or has experienced that he is moved little; this danger, however, is rarely absent in adolescents.

b) On the contrary, that which generally is not a proximate occasion can be a proximate occasion and sin for someone by reason of special fragility.

c) The dangers are greater in small theaters, which are accustomed to be worse than great ones in which cultivated society intervenes.

d) The danger is sometimes greatly attenuated if the spectator does not understand the dramas, or if he does not attend to the representation but only to the music.

V. The duty of the confessor. - a) The first is to turn all away from spectacles, as much as he can, because they are full of dangers, alien from the evangelical spirit, excite passions, foster sensualism, and enervate the soul. The custom of attending takes away all devotion and often is a proximate occasion of sinning.

b) Actors of base and impious scenes cannot be admitted to the sacraments unless they either renounce the profession or at least abstain from scenes of this kind: they are public sinners furnishing public scandal.

c) As regards those who have sufficient reason for attending, let the confessor strive to diminish the danger, e.g., by admonishing that they not deliberately use telescopic spectacles and not attend scenic dances or not attend to them.

VI. Writings: 1) some are professedly impious and against religion, or obscene, that is, composed for exciting lust, and these are a proximate danger of sinning generally for all, unless perhaps for a learned and pious theologian if it is a question of impious writings, and for an altogether serious and honorable man if it is a question of obscene writings; hence of themselves they are prohibited by the Index.

2. Others are not impious or obscene except incidentally and on a given occasion, because they have something slight of obscenity or against the Church or its ministers, such as are many romantic and dramatic works today, and these constitute a proximate danger for many, especially for the younger. Now:

a) The former are not permitted to be read unless there is a grave reason of necessity and at the same time fitting cautions are employed by which the danger becomes remote; for this besides, a dispensation from the law of the Index is to be obtained.

b) Similarly to read the others is a grave sin in a case in which they constitute a proximate danger, or if they have been reported by name in the Index.

c) Merely recreational reading of base or impious writings, when by the law of the Index they are not prohibited to someone, without utility and without danger, which nevertheless is rarely absent, is only a venial sin.

The gravity of the danger is to be weighed from the end, age and disposition, morals and religion of the reader, especially from frequency of reading, from the compensating influence of good writings, and above all from frequency of falls.

And similarly, according to the same rules, one must judge concerning writings subversive of society, e.g., anarchistic writings.

VII. The duty of the confessor. - 1) The first is to ask concerning writings and readings, and also to admonish, unless it is certain that the penitent is in good faith, and no fruit is to be hoped from admonition, and there is not present a proximate danger of sin; which can scarcely happen in those who habitually read depraved writings.

2. To those refusing to abandon a proximate danger from reading, he must deny absolution.

3. Depraved books which the penitent possesses are to be thrown away, or rather handed over to the confessor.

4. If someone has a serious reason for reading certain prohibited works, it is better to procure ecclesiastical license for him, and to admonish him to lock the books away at home, and also to read good works as an antidote.

5. Let him draw all, especially young persons, away from reading writings which favor indifferentism, liberalism, socialism, or foster sensualism, novels; because they easily cause great ruin of the soul, namely little by little and without being sensed they eradicate faith and devotion, cause disgust for good books, inflame the soul toward profane loves, and incline to vice.

6. Let him admonish parents and superiors of colleges that in this matter they be most vigilant toward sons and pupils.

7. To those who say that they wish to judge all things by themselves, let it be shown that it is impossible to judge concerning religious questions for those who have not studied philosophy and theology.

VIII. Observations. - 1) Innkeepers cannot a) display writings professedly depraved; b) nor generally and always less good and prohibited writings, without a just reason; c) nevertheless they can do so if great damage is to be avoided, and at the same time they display good writings.

2. In readings there can be sin: a) because of scandal given; b) because of danger, for judging which various things are to be considered: the manner of proposing, the disposition of the one reading, habitual or transitory reading, circumstances, as if good writings are also read at the

same time, etc.; c) because of cooperation, as in editors, sellers, writers, printers, etc., concerning whom it is customary to speak in the treatise on Faith.

3. Those who, on account of a legitimate reason, e.g., on account of the necessities of their trade or industry, subscribe to depraved daily papers or periodicals, should not read the depraved things printed there.

4. Concerning moving-picture spectacles, similar things hold as concerning theaters.

5. Concerning worldly ornament and novelty in dress the following hold:

The ornament of women, even for fostering and elevating beauty, of itself is an indifferent thing, and therefore good if it is done according to right reason; hence excess of itself is only a venial sin, yet it can be mortal both by reason of the intention or depraved end mortally evil, and by reason of danger or grave scandal.

Hence: A. They sin mortally a) if they adorn themselves with the intention of provoking to lust; b) if they use a garment so thin and subtle that dishonorable parts are not sufficiently covered; c) if they have the breast immoderately uncovered, so that the middle of the breasts or almost the whole breasts are uncovered, or covered only by a translucent veil; this holds concerning our cultivated regions, not concerning barbarous peoples; d) if they have the breast not altogether immoderately uncovered and show only the upper part of the breasts but contrary to the custom of the country, or introduce such a custom: for extraordinary and unaccustomed things move more. This custom is not praiseworthy, and therefore rather is to be extirpated.

On the contrary, B. They sin venially a) if from levity, vanity, or boasting they adorn themselves according to the custom of the country; b) if the ornament is beyond the condition of state; c) if, without sufficient reason, they bear the breast not altogether immoderately uncovered according to the custom of the country, for accustomed things allure less; and also, apart from this custom, if they have the breast moderately uncovered or the arms uncovered, or a garment so made that the form of the breast altogether appears, or introduce such a custom, for such a custom is not praiseworthy; d) if in ornament there is fiction or simulation properly so called, e.g., of beauty, as if, without an excusing reason, at least of legitimate recreation, a woman uses masculine dress, puts on masked garments, smears the face with paint and pigments, uses another's hair for feigning her own, wears false breasts, etc., unless these have been introduced by general custom; e) if they invent or make or introduce new and curious ornaments, ridiculous fashions.

C. No sin is present a) if right intention, legitimate custom of the country, and the condition of state are preserved; hence in many regions to proceed today with hair not veiled is no sin: nevertheless that custom is not praiseworthy, cf. I Cor. XI, 6; b) if a woman adorns herself to please a man, a married woman to please her husband, when he commands it, or lest he turn aside to other women, or an unmarried woman in order to have a husband; nevertheless if she does not wish to have a husband, let her leave even superfluous ornament; c) if it is done by dissimulation alone and someone uses ornament for covering or hiding a defect, e.g., another's hair for covering baldness, a false breast if the other has been cut away, paint for hiding deformity arising from a defect, unless this violates only the natural law, as in our Belgium it can safely be admitted.

It should be noted that there is no obligation of dismissing ornament decent according to the custom of the country, even if certain determined men would be allured from it to concupiscence, because this would be too burdensome. But if it is contrary to the custom of the country, or if it is immodest, though nevertheless not altogether dishonorable, there is such an obligation for avoiding the scandal of a determined person, at least several times, according to the principles which are expounded in the treatise on Charity.

Question VII: Concerning the Learned and Persons of Distinguished Condition

I. The learned in general.[1] - "Since illiterate and common men are very much led and fascinated by the example of the learned, it is of great interest that the learned lead a Christian life and be of good example. Therefore when men learned in literary studies approach the sacred tribunal, let the confessor hold these special things toward them: 1. According to their learning let him treat them and render them honor. - 2. Among the admonitions to be given to learned men, the chief one in our times is this: that they not despise the Catholic faith before profane science. Let every discipline have its praise, let talents be exercised, let arts and sciences be cultivated; yet how immensely true faith excels all these things! The doctrine of faith, as being from God, who does not know how to deceive or be deceived, lacks every error and every uncertainty; profane science, the offspring of human reason, is subject to many errors and uncertain hypotheses; by faith we obtain the fellowship of the sons of God in this age, and in the future we shall possess eternal life; profane science is confined by the narrow limits of this life, and without faith will profit nothing after death. Nor should it be grievous to us that revealed truths exceed our grasp; let us rather rejoice concerning their sublimity, so that besides the other faculties it is also permitted to us to enslave our intellect to God. Excellent are the things which Thomas a Kempis wrote concerning this matter in the golden little work *De Imit. Christi*, lib. 4, cap. 18, from which I excerpt some sentences:

[1] In this question we insert the admonitions of Fr. Aertnijs, *Theol. Past.*, nn. 165-166 and nn. 163-164.

"God is able to operate more than man can understand... If you do not understand or grasp the things which are within you, how will you comprehend those which are above you?... Do not care, do not dispute with your thoughts, nor answer the doubts cast in by the devil; but believe the words of God, believe His saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy will flee from you... For he does not tempt unbelievers and sinners, whom he already securely possesses; but faithful devout persons he tempts and vexes in various ways... Whatever you are not able to understand, securely commit to almighty God. God does not deceive; he is deceived who believes himself too much... Eternal and immense God, and of infinite power, does great and inscrutable things in heaven and on earth, nor is there investigation of His marvelous works. If such were the works of God that they could easily be grasped by human reason, they would not have to be called marvelous or ineffable." - 3. When opportunity is given, it profits to exhort learned Catholic men that they also fight for the Catholic Church, for instance in periodicals, and especially, if they are Deputies to legislative assemblies, by speeches and votes; besides, by joining themselves to Catholic associations, etc. - 4. Nevertheless let the confessor know that learned men of neglected conscience are not lacking, who are slaves of their passions and do not fear to keep silent about their grave sins. Wherefore the confessor, if he deservedly suspects his penitent to be guilty of sins which he does not confess, should not fear to question him, e.g., concerning readings, precepts of the Church, duties of state. - 5. It can happen

that a man of this kind, however learned in profane disciplines, is ignorant in the doctrine of Religion, and does not know truths of the Faith which are necessary to know even by necessity of means. In that case, lest he suffuse the penitent with shame, let him use an indirect mode of instruction; for example, supposing those truths to be known to him and believed by him, let the confessor explicitly recall them, so that from this he may deduce the force and efficacy which they have for pursuing virtue and fleeing vices or for exciting contrition; besides, let him enjoin on the penitent as satisfaction prayers and the symbol of faith, which contain the dogmatic truths necessary to know."

II. Those wavering in Faith. - "As if for our time St. Hilary already long ago wrote: 'For there are many who, simulating faith, are not subject to faith, and rather constitute faith for themselves than receive it, being puffed up by the sense of human vanity, while they understand what they will, and are unwilling to understand what is true.' How many laymen cultivated in doctrine are found today who seem to be Catholics, but in reality do not have faith! Therefore it ought not seem wonderful if some among them are found who, from a human motive, do not fear to receive Easter Communion without faith in the presence of Christ.

"Since faith is the root of justification, it is manifest that those who are unbelieving concerning the truths of the Catholic faith or call them into doubt are not only unworthy of sacramental absolution but also incapable of it, unless they wish to come to their senses and elicit a true act of faith. But even then, if they have externally uttered heresy and have not been ignorant of the censure, they first need absolution from the excommunication contracted and specially reserved to the Pope.

"Moreover, concerning those fluctuating in faith or unbelieving in this way, attention must carefully be given to the sources of unbelief. The principal are: 1. defect of solid instruction in Religion; which defect in our age is for the most part to be imputed to parents, because they have committed their children to neutral schools, and have neglected Christian education, indeed have sown religious indifferentism in them by word and example. Due instruction must be procured for the ignorant of this kind by the living voice, books, etc. If they desire to be taught, perhaps they fluctuated inculpably; but if they refuse instruction, they are by no means immune from grave fault. - 2. Sensualism or materialism, by which worldly men gape only after pleasures of the senses, riches, and honors; whence there arises a hidden hatred of truth, which, as contrary to their depraved affections, is rendered hateful to them. Therefore, to lull the anxieties of conscience, they follow doubts against the faith, take complacence in the same, gladly hear and read whatever is opposed against the truths of faith, and although truth is solidly proposed to them, nevertheless suspend assent. - 3. Swollen pride, which they decorate with the specious title of emancipation of the human race or independence of human reason. Such persons, boasting themselves enlightened, wish to rise above the common people, and contemn whatever exceeds their grasp. Both these sources are accustomed to help each other. Not a few are also found who, from ostentation, from desire of persuading themselves of errors, utter unbelief, yet believe in heart.

"As regards remedies, the principal, lest I say the only one, is prayer. Then they are to be dissuaded from conversation with men who scatter doubts and errors, and from reading liberal books and periodicals. Disputation with them concerning the truths of faith is everywhere to be avoided, unless they sincerely desire to be taught; nor are books of controversies to be persuaded to them; for

otherwise they continue to reason concerning faith, are strengthened in the opinion that one must arrive at faith by reasoning, and, what is worse, their vanity is nourished."[2]

[2] For their instruction and confirmation in Faith, among other works the following deserve to be commended, for cultivated persons: Van Gestel, *Het geloof van den christen*; Famulus, *Heeft God werkelijk tot de menschen gesproken?*; Dekkers, *Roomsch-Katholieke Godsdienstleer* (Dogmatics - Morals - Doctrine of Grace); *Apologie*; Laforet, *Les dogmes catholiques*; Aug. Nicolas, *Etudes philosophiques sur le christianisme*; Deschamps, *Demonstration catholique*; De Segur, *Opuscules*; Hugueny, *Critique et catholique*; Verelst, *Apologetique* (Dutch translation), *Dogmatique, Morale*; Hettinger, *Apologetik* (French translation); Wilmers, *Lehrbuch der Religion* (Dutch and French translation); Mausbach, *Religion, Christenthum und Kirche*; *Die Katholische Moral und ihre Gegner*.

III. Great persons and the rich. - "To hear the confessions of great persons and the rich is certainly a most salutary work, not only on account of their own salvation, but also because their good or evil example has much weight. But at the same time it is a most difficult work, both because of the external condition of their life, account of which must be had, and because of the peculiar allurements of temptations to which they are accustomed to be subject. For they are subject to pride, which renders them little docile to the admonitions of priests; they have peace in their substance, namely they adhere to their riches, by whose help they strive to create for themselves an earthly paradise, and they have little care of acquiring eternal beatitude; therefore they abhor the troublesome precepts of the Christian life; whence it is no wonder that today among great persons and the rich many are hostile to Liberalism and indifferent toward Religion. Hence it is difficult to moderate penitents of this kind in the narrow way which leads to life, namely eternal life. Nevertheless this difficulty ought not frighten away the confessor, but sharpen his zeal, so that with fitting discretion, industry, kindness, and fortitude, he may transfer penitents of this kind from a worldly life to a Christian life, lest they be gathered into the number of those to whom Christ threatened: Woe to you, rich!"

Moreover in treating great persons and the rich the confessor must use common principles and rules; for what God commanded the princes of the Jewish people also befits the judges of the Christian people in the sacred tribunal of Penance: "There will be no distance of persons; thus you shall hear the small as the great; nor shall you accept the person of anyone; because it is the judgment of God," Deut. I, 17. Hence we propose the following things to be observed by the confessor: 1. Let him always be courteous with penitents of this kind, for instance as regards the external form of questions, admonitions, instructions, and exhortations which it is necessary to impart to them; nevertheless formulas of immoderate courtesy are also to be avoided. - 2. Let him beware lest he flatter them and connive at their sins from weak fear of men, by keeping silent about truth or dissimulating it. To penitents, however conspicuous, when the state of their conscience has demanded it, the baseness of corrupt life must likewise be placed before the eyes; necessary means for amendment are to be enjoined, or even, if there is need, absolution is to be deferred. - 3. The things which must specially be inculcated to the rich St. Paul succinctly set forth to Timothy in these words: "Command the rich of this age not to be high-minded, nor to hope in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who gives us all things abundantly to enjoy; to do good, to become rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate, to treasure up for themselves a foundation for the future, that they may lay hold of life," I Tim. VI, 17-19. Therefore the Apostle first teaches the vices from which they must beware, namely pride, lest they be lifted up and despise others, and confidence in riches, since these are passing and fleeting. Secondly he teaches the virtues which they must exercise, namely that, humble and grateful, they hope in the living God, who always remains and

from whose munificence all things proceed; therefore for His sake let them do good works, give liberally to the poor, and communicate their riches. If they have done these things, they will heap up for themselves true riches going to endure perpetually. Spiritual treasure is the gathering of merits, which are the foundation of the future building which is prepared for us in heaven."

Question VIII: Concerning the Excommunicated

I. The obligation of the confessor as regards excommunications. - Not rarely penitents occur who have contracted the penalty of excommunication. Hence it seems opportune summarily to set forth those things which concerning this matter are more necessary in practice and therefore specially to be attended to.[1] And indeed the confessor has the obligation both of knowing sufficiently those things which regard excommunications, and of admonishing penitents concerning these things.

[1] Authors who have written after the promulgated Code can be inspected, such as Prummer and Vermeersch. Cf. *Revue Eccl. de Liege*, Nov. 1928.

A. There is the obligation of knowing with habitual knowledge:

1. At least the better known or more frequently occurring censures.

Therefore let him know that the following are excommunicated by the very fact from law: apostates, heretics, schismatics; those publishing, defending, reading, or retaining books of these persons defending apostasy, heresy, schism, or other books prohibited by name through apostolic letters; authors or publishers of books of Sacred Scripture or commentaries printed without license; those issuing laws, commands, decrees against the liberty or rights of the Church, or impeding the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction by recurring to lay power; those giving their name to a Masonic sect or similar association plotting against the Church or legitimate civil power; those laying violent hands on clerics or religious persons, especially on bishops and cardinals, most of all on the Supreme Pontiff; whoever communicate in the offense, and clerics in divine things, with an excommunicated person to be avoided; those sacrilegiously casting away the consecrated species or carrying them away or retaining them for an evil end; those procuring abortion when the effect has followed; those dueling and their accomplices; those absolving accomplices in a base sin; those falsely denouncing a confessor concerning solicitation; those solicited by a confessor and not denouncing him; apostates from religion; those presuming to enter marriage while the impediment of a vow of chastity stands, whether solemn, or simple and perpetual emitted in religious profession; those violating religious enclosure; those entering marriage before a non-Catholic minister or with a pact of educating offspring in a non-Catholic religion; likewise those handing over children to be baptized by a non-Catholic minister or to be instituted in a non-Catholic religion; those commanding or compelling non-Catholics or others interdicted to be handed over to ecclesiastical burial; those usurping ecclesiastical goods, and those alienating precious things or things exceeding the value of 30,000 fr.,[2] etc.

[2] Several understand this of value in gold.

2. Also to know which of these are reserved.

For there are altogether few which are reserved to no one and can be absolved by any confessor, namely those which affect persons publishing books concerning Sacred Scripture without license,

those handing over the unworthy to ecclesiastical burial, those illegitimately alienating ecclesiastical goods of great value, those compelling one to embrace the clerical or religious state, and those not denouncing the confessor by whom they were solicited. All the others are reserved either to the Ordinary, or to the Supreme Pontiff: either simply, or specially, or even most specially, such as sacrilegious casting away or carrying off or retaining of the consecrated species, laying a violent hand on the Supreme Pontiff himself, and absolution of an accomplice. It should be noted:

a) those absolving from an excommunication *latae sententiae* reserved in a most special or special manner without due faculty incur by the very fact an excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See, can. 2338, § 1; nevertheless in doubt either of law or of fact, reservation does not urge, can. 2245, § 4;

b) besides, all censures *ab homine* by that very fact are reserved to him who inflicted the censure or pronounced the sentence, can. 2245, § 2.

3. To know also the conditions required for incurring them.

They are: a) on the part of the subject, that he be baptized; in possession of reason and capable of malice; pubescent, according to the discipline now in force; and subject to the jurisdiction of the one excommunicating;

b) on the part of the object, that the sin be external, grave, consummated, and not only attempted, in the species which is reserved, in this sense that it fulfill all the conditions placed in the pronouncement of the censure, and joined with present contumacy, can. 2242, § 1. Hence in the sinner there is required knowledge both of the law prohibiting and of the special penalty to be inflicted on transgressors;[3] and therefore ignorance, even culpable, excuses, not however affected ignorance, which is equated with knowledge, nor always gross ignorance, unless the censure is brought against those who presumed, dared, knowingly, studiously, deliberately, rashly acted, can. 2229.

[3] Prummer, *Th. M.*, III, n. 485, observes: "In the external forum presumed contumacy sometimes suffices. For when some ecclesiastical law has been sufficiently promulgated, knowledge of it is presumed in all subjects, who, if they transgress this law, must pay the penalties and censures sanctioned. Hence, for example, a Catholic who contracts marriage before a non-Catholic minister incurs the excommunication brought, although he is ignorant of the existence of this censure, Holy Office, 11 May 1892. Therefore such a Catholic truly ignorant of the excommunication can be absolved in the internal forum by any confessor, but still needs absolution in the external forum."

B. Generally there is the obligation of admonishing delinquents who are ignorant of excommunication, so that, namely, they may know the obligation of ecclesiastical law and conceive greater horror of sin, and thus the law attain its end.

Nor in the case can the principle rather often praised be applied: admonition is not to be made if it is not hoped that it will profit. For this principle can be invoked only when it is a question of ignorance of law and sin, for the good of the penitent and unless graver inconveniences are feared, namely for avoiding formal sin. For if he in good faith is ignorant of law and sin, and it is not foreseen that he will be amended, it is better to abstain from admonition and to permit inculpable transgression and material sin than by admonishing to provoke culpable transgression and formal sin. But that does not hold in the case when it is a question of mere ignorance of the penalty; for formal sin is already present. Hence then there is no reason for omitting admonition, but it must be made with every

solicitude so that sin may be avoided in the future. - But if some do not care concerning this, or even deliberately omit it, they act thus so that they may avoid for themselves the inconveniences of future recourse to the Ordinary or to the Sacred Penitentiary. This is to seek one's own convenience, not the good of the penitent or of the Church, concerning which alone the faithful minister must be solicitous.

II. When the confessor can absolve from reserved censures. - One who is excommunicated is not freed from a censure except by legitimate absolution, can. 2248, § 1; but a simple confessor of himself cannot absolve from a reserved censure, but only he who has due jurisdiction for this, ordinary or delegated. Yet when the cause is more urgent, delegated jurisdiction for absolving from reserved censures is granted by the law itself, namely:

1. In danger of death, any priest, even if an approved priest is present, can licitly and validly absolve in the sacramental forum any penitents whatever from all censures without exception, can. 882. Nevertheless the dying person, after he has recovered, is held to have recourse within a month, by himself or through the confessor, to the legitimate superior or to another furnished with faculty, under penalty of falling again into the censure, and to stand by their commands, but only in two cases: if the censure was brought *ab homine* through a particular sentence, or if it is reserved to the Supreme Pontiff in a most special manner, can. 2252.

2. In more urgent cases, any confessor can directly absolve in the sacramental forum from all reserved censures *latae sententiae*, but by explicitly imposing the burden of having recourse, under penalty of falling again, within a month, at least by letter and through the confessor, if this can be done without grave inconvenience, the name being kept back, to a superior furnished with faculty and of standing by his commands; or of approaching another confessor furnished with faculty, so that from him, confession being repeated at least of the offense with the censure, he may obtain absolution and receive commands from him.

The more urgent cases are determined by law: if namely censures *latae sententiae* cannot be observed

a) without danger of grave scandal, e.g., if because of the excommunication of a parish priest or magistrate grave anger or disturbance would arise in the people; or

b) without danger of infamy, e.g., if all things are now prepared for nuptials, or a parish priest or vicar cannot omit celebration, or a layman Easter communion, without infamy; or

c) if it would be hard for the penitent to remain in the state of grave sin for the time necessary for the competent superior to provide, Holy Office, 16 June 1897, and can. 2254, § 1 and 2; yet this is not hard for all.

3. Indeed in an extraordinary case, when this recourse is foreseen as morally impossible, any confessor, except in the case of absolution of an accomplice, can grant absolution without the burden of recourse, or of confession to be made before a privileged confessor, but with a twofold condition: a) the things to be enjoined by law having been enjoined, namely removal of scandal or proximate occasion, and reparation of damage, and b) a fitting penance and satisfaction for the censure having been imposed, besides the sacramental penance. This indeed in such a way that the penitent, unless within a fitting time to be determined

beforehand by the confessor he has done penance and given satisfaction, falls again into the censure, can. 2254, § 3.

Recourse can be made orally, or by letter, or through another, e.g., the confessor. In this last case it is morally impossible if neither the confessor, because, for example, he must depart before the response and while absent cannot safely communicate the response without others suspecting, nor the penitent, perhaps inexperienced, can send a letter, and at the same time it is hard for the penitent to approach another confessor, Holy Office, 9 Nov. 1898; 5 Sept. 1900. But if the penitent is a priest, he is never excused from recourse, because he himself can easily write to Rome and seek a response under a fictitious name, Holy Office, 3 June 1899.

III. Absolution of excommunication in the external forum and in the internal forum. - Excommunication *latae sententiae* of itself holds the delinquent who is conscious of the offense in each forum; yet in such a way that before declaratory sentence he is excused from observing the penalty as often as he cannot observe it without infamy, and in the external forum no one can exact the observance of the penalty from him unless the offense is notorious, can. 2232, § 1. Hence absolution can be given in each forum: by the confessor in the sacramental forum; outside the sacramental forum by him who has ordinary or delegated jurisdiction in the external forum over the guilty person.

Absolution given in the external forum holds also in the internal forum; hence if someone was absolved from a reserved censure, the sin is no longer reserved. Absolution in the internal forum of itself does not hold in the external forum unless it is proved or legitimately presumed, and otherwise the superior can urge observance until absolution in the external forum has been had, can. 2251. Therefore, scandal having been removed, e.g., if the excommunication was not public in the place or if it is sufficiently established concerning absolution received, one absolved in the internal forum can conduct himself as such in acts of the external forum.

Ordinarily, however, for public offenses, absolution is not to be given in the internal forum before absolution in the external forum has been obtained; hence what was said above concerning more urgent cases, namely danger of grave scandal or infamy, holds only if reputation is still intact and the offense is not notorious; and therefore it does not hold concerning penalties *ferendae sententiae*, which are considered as *ab homine*, can. 2217, § 3. But if then for someone it would be especially hard to remain in the state of grave sin, he could be absolved, but only from a censure *latae sententiae*, in the internal forum provisionally under the burden of recurring within a month; but in the external forum he would have to conduct himself as excommunicated and abstain from public reception of the sacraments until, scandal having been sufficiently repaired, he has also been absolved in the external forum.

In the sacramental forum the customary form of absolution is to be employed, in which absolution from censures is contained; in the external forum, unless the superior granting the faculty has prescribed a more solemn form, it can be given in any manner; nevertheless it is fitting to observe the form handed down in the rituals, can. 2250, § 3.

IV. Manner of proceeding in practice. - Therefore the confessor receiving accusation of a sin which incurs excommunication should proceed thus:

1. First let him carefully examine whether all conditions, on the part of the subject and object, necessary for incurring the censure are present.

2. Likewise whether the further conditions of the censure as it is reserved are present; but if some founded doubt remains, the case is not reserved, can. 2245, § 4.

3. But if all required conditions are present, then it must be investigated whether it is a more urgent case or not; but if it is not, the penitent cannot be absolved, but is to be sent to another privileged confessor, or first the faculty of absolving is to be sought.

4. If it is a more urgent case, the penitent is to be admonished concerning the reserved censure and concerning the obligation of recurring within a month; and if he seriously promises, he can be absolved. And meanwhile the due faculties should be sought from the superior.

5. If he does not promise to recur, and does this because he foresees that recourse is morally impossible, then both reparation of scandal and damage and a special and fitting penance to be fulfilled within a fixed time are to be imposed on him; and if he promises to fulfill them, he will be able to be absolved.

6. If without sufficient reason he refuses to promise, he cannot be absolved, but can be sent to the superior or to another confessor having special faculties, from whom he may seek absolution.

7. If the penitent, notwithstanding the first promise, does not return to hear the commands of the superior, and thus acts from culpable negligence, he falls again into excommunication, because he makes little of the gravely prescribed recourse, which is not completed until the penitent has accepted the commands. But if he could not return without great inconvenience, he does not fall again into excommunication, but the obligation of recurring remains afterward as soon as he can;[4] but if recourse becomes morally impossible, what was said above under 5 must be done, and due reparation and a fitting penance imposed.

[4] From the nature of the thing it is established that a determined time was fixed for urging the obligation.

V. Observations. - 1. The reservation of the sin ceases when the reservation of the censure ceases.

2. When there exists a censure which impedes reception of the sacraments, as excommunication does, the censured person cannot be absolved from sins unless he first has been absolved from the censure, can. 2250, § 2. Nevertheless if absolution were granted by one having power, it would be valid, while the penitent was in good faith.

3. Ignorance of the censure generally excuses from its reservation, but ignorance of the reservation of the censure, once the censure is known, does not excuse.

4. "If the confessor, ignorant of the reservation, absolves the penitent from censure and sin, the absolution of the censure holds, provided it is not a censure *ab homine* or a censure reserved in a most special manner to the Apostolic See," can. 2247, § 3. Indeed also absolution from the

sin holds; for if someone has been absolved from a censure, the reservation of the sin altogether ceases.

5. Not only diverse censures, but even a censure of the same species, can be multiplied in the same subject, can. 2244, § 1. Hence "if he is held by several censures, he can be absolved from one, with the others by no means absolved. One seeking absolution must indicate all the cases; otherwise the absolution holds only for the case expressed. But if the absolution, although a particular petition was made, was general, as it is customarily given in sacramental confession, it holds, provided the one absolving has the competent faculty, also for those kept silent in good faith, excepting a censure reserved in a most special manner to the Apostolic See, but not for those kept silent in bad faith," can. 2249.

6. The absolution which a competent confessor has given from a reserved censure holds even if the confession was null or sacrilegious, provided the penitent accused the reserved things. If this accusation was omitted in good faith, several judge that even then the censure has been taken away, since the confessor is judged to wish to use his power efficaciously as far as he can.

An exception is made if someone confessed sacrilegiously at the time of a jubilee, because at this time faculties are granted only in order to gain the jubilee, which cannot happen by a sacrilegious confession.

7. He who after absolution omitted due recourse falls again into the censure, but not into the sin, which remains absolved; hence he must accuse only the omission of recourse as a sin. But if, after he has recurred, he does not observe the commands, he sins gravely, but whether he falls again into the censure is uncertain.

8. Although the censure is reserved to no one, nevertheless one cannot be absolved from it unless he has satisfied the due obligation or has seriously promised that he will fulfill it.

VI. Admonitions. - 1. Let them know that they sin gravely, as injuring the grave law of the Church: a) those who knowingly absolve without necessity from a reserved censure, b) those who, absolving in a more urgent case, omit admonition concerning recurring within a month, c) those who, delegated by the superior or, in an extraordinary case, by the law, omit imposing due reparation and a fitting penance.

2. Let them know that the Ordinary, in occult cases, can by himself or through another remit penalties *latae sententiae* established by common law, except censures reserved in a most special or special manner to the Apostolic See, can. 2237. Besides, bishops often obtain broader delegated faculties for notorious cases, or for those reserved in a special or even most special manner, at least for some cases. Hence generally, in place of the Sacred Penitentiary, recourse can be made to the bishop. In this case, however, care must be taken that the sacramental seal not be violated.

3. Let regular mendicant confessors know, and those who participate in the privileges of mendicants, that they can absolve from cases reserved to the bishop, not indeed by proper authority, but reserved by law, as, for example, is the case concerning procurement of abortion.

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Publisher's Notices

Little Works Published by R. P. Merkelbach, O.P.

The little works published by R. P. Merkelbach, O.P., in the collection *Pastoral Questions* were everywhere received with grateful mind and approved by many praises. Concerning this let certain testimonies be reported:

I. Concerning Chastity and Lust: third edition

The aim of our Review does not permit us a detailed examination of this little work. But the importance of the subject, and the truly masterly manner in which it is treated there, induce us to recommend it also to the Italian clergy. All know that questions of this kind are, as St. Alphonsus de Liguori wrote, "the more frequent and more abundant matter of confessions and that on account of which a greater number of souls slip down into hell," and therefore that there is for all confessors an extreme necessity of being perfectly instructed in it.

(*Civilta Cattolica*, 1926, p. 450.)

A work of great clearness in its terminology, of true solidity in its pastoral and penitential practice, and in which we find - what is too often lacking in similar works - the physiological and moral notions necessary to the confessor.

(P. Hourat, *Bull. Circulaire*, August 1927.)

...His chapter on the causes of and remedies of carnal sins is well-timed, and will be especially valuable for confessors and directors of youth.

(*The Month*, 1926, p. 476.)

Brief, clear, methodical: the first qualities of a summary which the author wished, as far as possible, to be complete so that it might be practical. Happy choice of preliminary anatomical and physiological notions: here one finds details ordinarily passed over in silence, and nevertheless indispensable. We cannot note all the particulars worthy of praise in this work: we would never finish.

(*Collationes Namurc.*, 1927, p. 213.)

The treatise *On Chastity*, while being complete, remains brief, as befits a work having above all a pastoral purpose. It has as its object chastity in marriage as well as in celibacy; it does not omit studying the causes and remedies of lust.

(*Collationes Tornacenses*, 1927, p. 47.)

II. Concerning Embryology and the Administration of Baptism: second edition

This volume gathers together and develops somewhat more than general treatises of morals do the questions relating to abortion, surgical interventions, and the administration of Baptism. In these matters, which give rise to so many distressing cases of conscience, one will learn with great interest the opinion of the eminent professor, whose delicacy of analysis and rigor of reasoning are sufficiently known. He solidly proves the severe solutions proposed by the Church; he very happily refuses to proclaim a certain obligation when it cannot be proved in a sufficient manner.

(J. Salsmans, S.J., *Nouvelle Revue theol.*, 1928, p. 71.)

We do not hesitate in the least to recommend warmly the acquisition of this fine fascicle to all priests, for whom it will be a sure guide in all the difficulties which can come out to meet them in the exercise of their sacred ministry.

(*Estudis Franciscans*, 1927, p. 118.)

One will be glad to find gathered here all the practical questions having relation to embryology and which are usually scattered in various treatises of moral theology, for example the questions relative to abortion, embryotomy, Caesarean operation, and the other surgical interventions of the same order, those which have regard to the administration of Baptism to immature fetuses or even in the womb of the mother.

(*Collationes Tornacenses*, 1927, p. 47.)

Here again one finds the qualities which we noted in the first volume of these *pastoral questions* (see *Collat. Namurc.*, XXI, 213). Exact recalling of the scientific data indispensable for the understanding of moral problems relative to the existence of the "unborn"; clear statements of the principles by which the solutions must be inspired; the solutions themselves firmly expressed; a manifest concern to avoid everything which would resemble an escape, where others seem to wish to sidestep... so many reasons recommending this work to the attention of serious readers.

(*Collectiones Namurc.*, 1928, p. 321.)

The doctrine in general is sound, the exposition clear and ordered, the end intended by the Author excellent. The booklet will certainly be useful, especially to priests who exercise the care of souls. We willingly recommend it.

(Felice M. Capello, S.J., *Gregorianum*, 1929, p. 282.)

IV. Concerning the Minister of Penance and His Duties

Most Reverend Father,

...It is with lively gratitude that I have received your book *De Poenitentiae Ministro*; thank you for having sent it to me, and thank you also for having published it. I am persuaded that it is worthy of your previous works.

Your studies of pastoral theology will thus constitute a collection of very first value. I wish for your books the broadest and most lasting influence.

25 April 1928.

- J. E. Card. Van Roey, Archbishop of Malines.

The learned Author, professor of Theology at Louvain, sets forth in it, with depth and clarity, both on the speculative and on the practical side, the questions of moral and pastoral theology which concern the jurisdiction and duties of the confessor, very important questions which are customarily developed too briefly in common scholastic treatises of moral Theology.

(*Osservatore Romano*, 9 March 1929.)

They are both Pastoral treatises, and will be acceptable to all shepherds of souls. The former deals with the confessor's treatment of various classes of penitents, much as St. Alphonsus did so well in the *Homo Apostolicus*. The chapters on Contemplatives are, we think, particularly helpful to confessors, and Father Merkelbach has given us the benefit of wide reading and a long experience. The second monograph deals with the confessor himself, his powers, jurisdiction, reservation, the Seal, etc... Though the Seminarist will hardly have time to read them with all his other work, the priest on the mission should find time to do so. We look forward to other works on the subject, promised by the scholarly author.

(*The Month*, August 1929, p. 184.)

V. Concerning the Parts of Penance and the Dispositions of the Penitent

Like the two volumes which preceded it, this one is a sum of dogmatic and moral doctrine, at the same time as a precious manual of pastoral theology. It is the fruit of numerous readings but also of long reflections. To everything which he touches the author gives a stamp of order and measure, and he does not declare himself satisfied until he has rendered it massive with ideas proposed, explained, defended, and coordinated. Too modestly he entitles his works *Pastoral Questions*. Read the present work, and you will see that no aspect is lacking in it which could figure in an extended treatise, not even historical surveys drawn from universally esteemed authors. One will find here what regards the matter of the sacrament of Penance, remote matter and proximate matter, that is, the acts of the penitent: contrition, confession, and satisfaction, with the diverse questions which one is accustomed to treat concerning them.

(G. Kiselstein, *Rev. Eccles. de Liege*, 1929, p. 398.)

In various fascicles, M. publishes the most important doctrinal pieces of pastoral theology. The fascicles are essentially a welcome compilation of the teachings set forth by various authors.

(*Zeitschrift fur kathol. Theolog.*, 1929, p. 457.)

All sorts of questions, otherwise divided among various treatises and sometimes touched on only in passing, we find here systematically ordered and discussed more fully, with reference to the best authors. This is indeed the great merit of this series.

(*Studien*, August 1929.)

...A series of pastoral-theological brochures which, in our opinion, is especially and also more than worthy of the particular attention of the clergy engaged in ministry... The firm, clear printing, with alternation of ordinary type, bold type, and italic type, corresponds to the content.

The Writer shows himself in these brochures an excellent theologian, whose works, simultaneously theoretical and practical, deserve the highest recommendation.

(M. van Grinsven, C.SS.R. - *Nederlandsche Katholieke stemmen*, February 1929, p. 44 sq.)

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