

THE SOCIAL STATE OF CATHOLIC  
COUNTRIES NO PREJUDICE TO THE  
SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH.

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I.

I HAVE been engaged in many lectures in showing that your place, my brethren, if you own the principles of the movement of 1833, is nowhere else but the Catholic Church. To this you may answer, that, even though I had been unanswerable, I should not have done much, for my argument has, on the whole, been a negative one; that there are difficulties on both sides of the controversy; that I have been enlarging on the Protestant difficulty, but there are now a few Catholic difficulties also; that, to be sure, you are not very happy in the Establishment, but you have serious misgivings whether you would be happier with us. Moreover, you might mention the following objection, in particular, as prominent and very practical, which weighs with you a great deal, and warns you off the ground whither I am trying to lead you. You are much offended, you would say, with the bad state of Catholics abroad, and their uninteresting character everywhere, compared with Pro

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission from Lectures on "Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching," delivered in 1850.

testants. Those countries, you say, which have retained Catholicism, are notoriously behind the age;—they have not kept up with the march of civilization; they are ignorant, and, in a measure, barbarous; they have the faults of barbarians; they have no self-command; they cannot be trusted. They must be treated as slaves, or they rebel; they emerge out of their superstitions in order to turn infidels. They cannot combine and coalesce in social institutions; they want the very faculty of citizenship. The sword, not the law, is their ruler. They are spectacles of idleness, slovenliness, want of spirit, disorder, dirt, and dishonesty. There must, then, be something in their religion to account for this; it keeps them children, and then, being children, they keep to it. No man in his senses, certainly no English gentleman, would abandon the high station which his country both occupies and bestows on him, in the eyes of man, to make himself the co-religionist of such slaves, and the creature of such a creed.

I propose to make a suggestion in answer to this objection; and, in making it, I shall consider you, my brethren, not as unbelievers, who are careless whether this objection strikes at Christianity or no; nor as Protestants proper, who have no concern about so expressing themselves, as to compromise the first centuries of the Church; but as those who feel that the Catholic Church was in the beginning founded by our Lord and His apostles; again, that the Establishment is not the Catholic Church; that nothing *but* the Church of Rome can be; that, if the Church of Rome is not, then the Catholic Church is not to be found in this age, or in this part of the world; for this is what I have been proving in my preceding lectures. What, then, you are saying comes, in fact, to this: We would rather deny our initial principles, than accept such a development of them as the communion of Rome, viewed as it is; we would rather believe Erastianism, and all its train of consequences, to be from God, than the religion of such countries as France and

Belgium, Spain and Italy. This is what you must mean to say, and nothing short of it.

## II.

I simply deny the justice of your argument, my brethren, and, to show you that I am not framing a view for the occasion, and moreover, in order to start with a principle, which, perhaps, you yourselves have before now admitted, I will quote words which I used myself twelve years ago:—  
 “If we were asked what was the object of Christian preaching, teaching, and instruction; what the office of the Church, considered as the dispenser of the word of God, I suppose we should not all return the same answer. Perhaps we might say that the object of Revelation was to enlighten and enlarge the mind, to make us act by reason, and to expand and strengthen our powers; or to impart knowledge about religious truth, knowledge being power directly it is given, and enabling us forthwith to think, judge, and act for ourselves; or to make us good members of the community, loyal subjects, orderly and useful in our station, whatever it be; or to secure, what otherwise would be hopeless, our leading a religious life; the reason why persons go wrong, throw themselves away, follow bad courses, and lose their character, being, that they have had no education, that they are ignorant. These and other answers might be given; some beside, and some short of the mark. It may be useful, then, to consider with what end, with what expectation, we preach, teach, instruct, discuss, bear witness, praise, and blame; what fruit the Church is right in anticipating as the result of her ministerial labours. St. Paul gives us a reason . . . different from any of those which I have mentioned. He laboured more than all the Apostles. And why? Not to civilize the world, not to smoothe the

face of society, not to facilitate the movements of civil government, not to spread abroad knowledge, not to cultivate the reason, not for any great worldly object, but 'for the elect's sake.' . . . And such is the office of the Church in every nation where she sojourns ; she attempts much ; she expects and promises little." <sup>1</sup>

I do not, of course, deny that the Church does a great deal more than she promises : she fulfils a number of secondary ends, and is the means of numberless temporal blessings to any country which receives her. I only say, she is not to be estimated and measured by such effects ; and if you think she is, my brethren, then I must rank you with such Erastians as Warburton, who, as I have shown you in a former lecture, considered political convenience to be the test and standard of truth.

I thus begin with a consideration which, you see, I fully recognized before I was a Catholic ; and now I proceed to another, which has been forced on me, as a matter of fact and experience, most powerfully ever since I was a Catholic, as it must be forced on every one who is in the communion of the Church ; and which, therefore, like the former, has not at all originated in the need, nor is put forth for the occasion to meet your difficulty.

The Church, you know, is in warfare ; her life here below is one long battle. But with whom is she fighting ? For till we know her enemy we shall not be able to estimate the skill of her tactics, the object of her evolutions, or to the success of her movements. We shall be like civilians, contemplating a field of battle, and seeing much dust, and smoke, and motion, much defiling, charging, and manœuvring, but quite at a loss to tell the meaning of all, or which party is getting the better. And, if we actually mistake the foe, we shall criticize when we should praise, and think that all is a defeat, when every blow is telling. In all under-

<sup>1</sup> "Parochial Sermons," vol. iv.

takings we must ascertain the end proposed before we can predicate their success or failure; and, therefore, before we so freely speak against the state of Catholic countries, and reflect upon the Church herself in consequence, we must have a clear view what it is the Church has proposed to do with them and for them. We have, indeed, a right to blame and dissent from the end which she sets before her; we may quarrel with the mission she professes to have received from above; we may dispense with Scripture, Fathers, and the continuous tradition of eighteen hundred years. That is another matter; then, at least, we have nothing to do with the theological movement which has given occasion to these lectures; then we are not in the way to join the Catholic Church; then we must be met on our own ground; but I am speaking to those who go a great way with me; who admit my principles, who almost admit my conclusion; who are all but ready to submit to the Church, but who are frightened by the present state of Catholic countries;—to such I say, Judge of her fruit by her principles and her object, which you yourselves also admit; not by those of her enemies, which you renounce.

The world believes in the world's ends as the greatest of goods; it wishes society to be governed simply and entirely for the sake of this world. Provided it could gain one little islet in the ocean, one foot upon the coast, if it could cheapen tea by sixpence a pound, or make its flag respected among the Esquimaux or Otaheitans, at the cost of a hundred lives and a hundred souls, it would think it a very good bargain. What does it know of hell? it disbelieves it; it spits upon, it abominates, it curses its very name and notion. Next, as to the devil, it does not believe in him either. We next come to the flesh, and it is free to confess that it does not think there is any great harm in following the instincts of that nature which, perhaps it goes on to say, God has given. How could it be otherwise? who ever heard of the world fighting against the flesh and the devil? Well, then, what is

its notion of the evil? Evil, says the world, is whatever is an offence to me, whatever obscures my majesty, whatever disturbs my peace. Order, tranquillity, popular contentment, plenty, prosperity, advance in arts and sciences, literature, refinement, splendour, this is my millennium, or rather my elysium, my swerga ; I acknowledge no whole, no individuality, but my own ; the units which compose me are but parts of me ; they have no perfection in themselves, no end but in me ; in my glory is their bliss and in the hidings of my countenance they come to nought.

### III.

Such is the philosophy and practice of the world ;—now the Church looks and moves in a simply opposite direction. It contemplates, not the whole, but the parts ; not a nation, but the men who form it ; not society in the first place, but in the second place, and in the first place individuals ; it looks, beyond the outward act, on and into the thought, the motive, the intention, and the will ; it looks beyond the world, and detects and moves against the devil, who is sitting in ambush behind it. It has, then, a foe in view, nay, it has a battle-field, to which the world is blind ; its proper battle-field is the heart of the individual, and its true foe is Satan.

My dear brethren, do not think I am declaiming in the air, or translating the pages of some old worm-eaten homily ; as I have already said, I bear my own testimony to what has been brought home to me most closely and vividly as a matter of fact since I have been a Catholic ; viz., that that mighty world-wide Church, like her Divine Author, regards, consults for, labours for the individual soul ; she looks at the souls for whom Christ died, and who are made over to her, and her one object, for which everything is sacrificed—ap-

pearances, reputation, worldly triumph—is to acquit herself well of this most awful responsibility. Her one duty is to bring forward the elect to salvation, and to make them as many as she can ;—to take offences out of their path, to warn them of sin, to rescue them from evil, to convert them, to teach them, to feed them, to protect them, and to perfect them. O most tender loving Mother, ill-judged by the world, which thinks she is, like itself, always minding the main chance ; on the contrary, it is her keen view of things spiritual, and her love for the soul, which hampers her in her negotiations and her measures, on this hard cold earth, which is her place of sojourning ! How easy would her course be, at least for a while, could she give up this or that point of faith, or connive at some innovation or irregularity in the administration of the Sacraments ! How much would Gregory have gained from Russia could he have abandoned the United Greeks ! how secure had Pius been upon his throne, could he have allowed himself to fire on his people !

No, my dear brethren, it is this supernatural sight and supernatural aim, which is the folly and the feebleness of the Church in the eyes of the world, and would be failure but for the Providence of God. The Church overlooks everything in comparison of the immortal soul. Good and evil to her are not lights and shades passing over the surface of society, but living powers, springing from the depths of the heart. Actions in her sight, are not mere outward deeds and words, committed by hand or tongue, and manifested in effects over a range of influence wider or narrower, as the case may be ! but they are the thoughts, the desires, the purposes, of the solitary responsible spirit. She knows nothing of space or time, except as secondary to will ; she knows no evil but sin, and sin is a something personal, conscious, voluntary ; she knows no good but grace, and grace again is something personal, private, special, lodged in the soul of the individual. She has one and one only aim—to purify the heart ; she collects who it is who has turned our thoughts from the external

crime to the inward imagination ; who said, that " unless our justice abounded more than that of scribes and Pharisees, we should not enter into the kingdom of heaven ;" and that " out of the heart proceed evils thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man."

Now I would have you take up the sermons of any preacher, or any writer on moral theology, who has a name among Catholics, and see if what I have said is not strictly fulfilled, however little you fancied so before you make trial. Protestants, I say, think that the Church aims at appearance and effect ; she must be splendid, and majestic, and influential ; fine services, music, lights, vestments, and then again, in her dealings with others, courtesy, smoothness, cunning, dexterity, intrigue, management—these, it seems, are the weapons of the Catholic Church. Well, my brethren, she cannot help succeeding, she cannot help being strong, she cannot help being beautiful ; it is her gift ; as she moves, the many wonder and adore ;—" *Et vera incessu patuit Dea.*" It cannot be otherwise, certainly ; but it is not her aim ; she goes forth on the one errand, as I have said, of healing the diseases of the soul. Look, I say, into any book of moral theology you will ; there is much there which may startle you : you will find principles hard to digest ; explanations which seem to you subtle ; details which distress you ; you will find abundance of what will make excellent matter of attack at Exeter Hall ; but you will find from first to last this one idea—(nay, you will find that very matter of attack upon her is occasioned by her keeping it in view ; she would be saved the odium, she would not have thus bared her side to the sword, but for her fidelity to it)—the one idea, I say, that sin is the enemy of the soul ; and that sin especially consists, not in overt acts, but in the thoughts of the heart.



## IV.

This, then, is the point I insist upon, in answer to the objection which you have to-day urged against me. The Church aims, not at making a show, but at doing a work. She regards this world, and all that is in it, as a mere shadow, as dust and ashes, compared with the value of one single soul. She holds that, unless she can, in her own way, do good to souls, it is no use her doing anything; she holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are upon it to die of starvation in extremest agony, so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say, should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, though it harmed no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse. She considers the action of this world and the action of the soul simply incommensurate, viewed in their respective spheres; she would rather save the soul of one single wild bandit of Calabria, or whining beggar of Palermo, than draw a hundred lines of railroad through the length and breadth of Italy, or carry out a sanitary reform, in its fullest details, in every city of Sicily, except so far as these great national works tended to some spiritual good beyond them.

Such is the Church, O ye men of the world, and now you know her. Such she is, such she will be, and though she aims at your good, it is in her own way,—and if you oppose her, she defies you. She has her mission, and do it she will, whether she be in rags, or in fine linen; whether with awkward or with refined carriage; whether by means of uncultivated intellects, or with the grace of accomplishments. Not that, in fact, she is not the source of numberless temporal and moral blessings to you also; the history of ages testifies it; but she makes no promises; she is sent to

seek the lost ;—that is her first object, and she will fulfil it, whatever comes of it.

And now, in saying this, I think I have gone a great way towards suggesting one main solution of the difficulty which I proposed to consider. The question was this :—How is it, that at this time Catholic countries happen to be behind Protestants in civilization? In answer, I do not at all determine how far the fact is so, or what explanation there may be of the appearance of it ; but anyhow the fact, granting it exists, is surely no objection to Catholicism, unless Catholicism has professed, or ought to have professed, directly to promote mere civilization ;—on the other hand, it has a work of its own, and this work is, first, *different* from that of the world ; next, *difficult of attainment*, compared with that of the world ; and, lastly, *secret* from the world in its details and consequences. If, then, Spain or Italy be deficient in secular progress, if the national mind in those countries be but partially formed, if it be unable to develop into civil institutions, if it have no moral instinct of deference to a policeman, if the national finances be in disorder, if the people be excitable, and open to deception from political pretenders, if it know little or nothing of arts, sciences, and literature ; I repeat, of course, I do not admit all this, except hypothetically, because it is difficult to draw the line between what is true in it and what is not ;—then all I can say, is, that it is not wonderful that civil governments, which profess certain objects, should succeed better than the Church, which does not. Not till the State is blamed for not making saints, may it fairly be laid to the fault of the Church that she cannot invent a steam-engine or construct a tariff. It is, in truth, merely because she has often done so much more than she professes, it is really in consequence of her very exuberance of benefit to the world, that the world is disappointed that she does not display that exuberance always,

—like some hangers-on of the great, who come at length to think they have a claim on their bounty.

## • V.

Now, let me try to bring out what I mean more in detail; and, in doing so, I hope to be pardoned, my brethren, if my language be now and then of a more directly religious cast than I would willingly admit into disquisitions such as the present; though, speaking, as I do, in a place set apart for religious purposes, I am not perhaps called upon to apologize.

In religious language, then, the one object of the Church, to which every other object is second, is that of reconciling the soul to God. She cannot disguise from herself, that, with whatever advantages her children commence their course, in spite of their baptism, in spite of their most careful education and training, still the great multitude of them require her present and continual succour to keep them or rescue them from a state of mortal sin. Taking human nature as it is, she knows well, that, left to themselves, they would relapse into the state of those who are not Catholics, whatever latent principle of truth and goodness might remain in them, and whatever consequent hope there might be of a future revival. They may be full of ability and energy, they may be men of genius, men of literature and taste, poets and painters, musicians and architects; they may be statesmen or soldiers; they may be in professions or in trade; they may be skilled in the mechanical arts; they may be a hard-working, money-making community; they may have great political influence; they may pour out a flood of population on every side; they may have a talent for colonization; or, on the other hand, they may be members of a country once glorious, whose

day is passed ; where luxury, or civil discord, or want of mental force, or other more subtle cause, is the insuperable bar in the way of any national demonstration ; or they may be half reclaimed from barbarism ; or they may be a simple rural population ; they may be in the cold north, or the beautiful south ; but, whatever and wherever they are, the Church knows well, that those vast masses of population, as viewed in the individual units of which they are composed, are in a state of continual lapse from the Centre of sanctity and love, ever falling under His displeasure, and tending to a state of habitual alienation from Him. Her one work towards these many millions is, year after year, day after day, to be raising them out of the mire, and when they sink again to raise them again, and so to keep them afloat, as she best may, on the surface of that stream, which is carrying them down to eternity. Of course, through God's mercy, there are numbers who are exceptions to this statement, who are living in obedience and peace, or going on to perfection ; but the word of Christ, "Many are called, few are chosen," is fulfilled in any extensive field of operation which the Church is called to superintend. Her one object, through her ten thousand organs, by preachers and by confessors, by parish priests and by religious communities, in missions and in retreats, at Christmas and at Easter, by fasts and by feasts, by confraternities and by pilgrimages, by devotions and by indulgences, is this unwearied, ever-patient reconciliation of the soul to God and obliteration of sin. Thus, in the words of Scripture, most emphatically, she knows nought else but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It is her ordinary toil, into which her other labours resolve themselves, or towards which they are directed. Does she send out her missionaries ? Does she summon her doctors ? Does she enlarge or diversify her worship ? Does she multiply her religious bodies ? It is all to gain souls to Christ. And if she encourages secular enterprises, studies, or pursuits, as she does, or the arts of civilization generally,

it is either from their indirect bearing upon her great object, or from the spontaneous energy which great ideas exert, and the irresistible influence which they exercise, in matters and in provinces not really their own.

Moreover, as sins are of unequal gravity in God's judgment, though all of whatever kind are offensive to Him, and incur their measure of punishment, the Church's great object is to discriminate between sin and sin, and to secure in individuals that renunciation of evil, which is implied in the idea of a substantial and unfeigned conversion. She has no warrant, and she has no encouragement, to enforce upon men in general more than those habits of virtue, the absence of which would be tantamount to their separation from God; and she thinks she has done a great deal, and exults in her success, does she proceed so far; and she bears as she may, what remains still to be done, in the conviction that, did she attempt more, she might lose all. There are sins which are simply incompatible with contrition and absolution under any circumstances; there are others which are disorders and disfigurements of the soul. She exhorts men against the second, she directs her efforts against the first.

Now here at once the Church and the world part company; for the world, too, as is necessary, has its scale of offences as well as the Church; but, referring them to a contrary object, it classifies them on quite a contrary principle; so that what is heinous in the world is often regarded patiently by the Church, and what is horrible and ruinous in the judgment of the Church may fail to exclude a man from the best society of the world. And, this being so, when the world contemplates the training of the Church and its result, it cannot, from the nature of the case, if for no other reason, avoid thinking very contemptuously of fruits, which are so different from those which it makes the standard and token of moral excellence in its own code of right and wrong.

## VI.

I may say the Church aims at three special virtues, as reconciling and uniting the soul to its Maker;—faith, purity, and charity; for two of which the world cares little or nothing. The world, on the other hand, puts in the foremost place, in some states of society, certain heroic qualities; in others, certain virtues of a political or mercantile character. In ruder ages, it is personal courage, strength of purpose, magnanimity; in more civilized, honesty, fairness, honour, truth, and benevolence:—virtues, all of which, of course, the teaching of the Church comprehends, all of which she expects in their degree in all her consistent children, and all of which she exacts in their fulness in her saints: but which, after all, most beautiful as they are, admit of being the fruit of nature as well as of grace; which do not necessarily imply grace at all; which do not reach so far as to sanctity, or unite the soul by any supernatural process to the source of supernatural perfection and supernatural blessedness. Again, as I have already said, the Church contemplates virtue and vice in their first elements, as conceived and existing in thought, desire, and will, and holds that the one or the other may be as complete and mature, without passing forth from the home of the secret heart, as if it had ranged forth in profession and in deed all over the earth. Thus, at first sight, she seems to ignore bodies politic, and society, and temporal interests: whereas the world, on the contrary, talks of religion as being a matter of such private concern, so personal, so sacred, that it has no opinion at all about it: it praises public men, if they are useful to itself, but simply ridicules inquiry into their motives, thinks it impertinent in others to attempt it, and out of taste in themselves to invite it. All public men it considers to be pretty much the same at bottom; but what matter is that to it, if they do its work?

It offers high pay, and it expects faithful service ; but as to its agents, overseers, men of business, operatives, journeymen, figure-servants, and labourers, what they are personally, what are their principles and aims, what their creed, what their conversation ; where they live, how they spend their leisure time, whither they are going, how they die,—I am stating a simple matter of fact, I am not here praising or blaming, I am but contrasting,—I say, all questions implying the existence of the soul, are as much beyond the circuit of the world's imagination, as they are intimately and primarily present to the apprehension of the Church.

The Church, then, considers the momentary, fleeting act of the will, in the three subject matters I have mentioned, to be capable of guiltiness of the deadliest character, or of the most efficacious and triumphant merit. Moreover, she holds that a soul laden with the most enormous offence in deed as well as thought, a savage tyrant, who delighted in cruelty, an habitual adulterer, a murderer, a blasphemer, who has scoffed at religion through a long life, and corrupted every soul which he could bring within his influence, who has loathed the Sacred Name, and cursed his Saviour,—that such a man can, under circumstances, in a moment, by one thought of the heart, by one true act of contrition, reconcile himself to Almighty God (through His secret grace), without Sacrament, without priest, and be as clean, and fair, and lovely, as if he had never sinned. Again, she considers that in a moment also, with eyes shut and arms folded, a man may cut himself off from the Almighty by a deliberate act of the will, and cast himself into perdition. With the world it is the reverse ; a member of society may go as near the line of evil, as the world draws it, as he will ; but, till he has passed it, he is safe. Again, when he has once transgressed it, recovery is impossible ; let honour of man or woman be sullied, and to restore its splendour is simply to undo the past ; it is impossible.

Such being the extreme difference between the Church

and the world, both as to the measure and the scale of moral good and evil, we may be prepared for those vast difference in matters of detail, which I hardly like to mention, lest they should be out of keeping with the gravity of the subject, as contemplated in its broad principle. For instance, the Church pronounces the momentary wish, if conscious and deliberate, that another should be struck down dead, or suffer any other grievous misfortune, as a blacker sin than a passionate, unpremeditated attempt on the life of the Sovereign. She considers direct, unequivocal consent, though as quick as thought, to a single unchaste desire as indefinitely more heinous than any lie which can possibly be fancied, that is, when that lie is viewed, of course, in itself, and apart from its causes, motives, and consequences. Take a mere beggar-woman, lazy, ragged, and filthy, and not over-scrupulous of truth—I do not say she has arrived at perfection—but if she is chaste, and sober, and cheerful, and goes to her religious duties (and I am supposing not at all an impossible case), she will, in the eyes of the Church, have a prospect of heaven, which is quite closed and refused to the State's pattern-man, the just, the upright, the generous, the honourable, the conscientious, if he be all this, not from a supernatural power—I do not determine whether this is likely to be the fact, but I am contrasting views and principles—not from a supernatural power, but from mere natural virtue. Polished, delicate-minded ladies, with little of temptation around them, and no self-denial to practice, in spite of their refinement and taste, if they be nothing more, are objects of less interest to her than many a poor outcast who sins, repents, and is with difficulty kept just within the territory of grace. Again, excess in drinking is one of the world's most disgraceful offences; odious it ever is in the eyes of the Church, but if it does not proceed to the loss of reason, she thinks it a far less sin than one deliberate act of detraction, though the matter of it be truth. And again, not



unfrequently does a priest hear a confession of thefts, which he knows would sentence the penitent to transportation if brought into a court of justice, but which he knows, too, in the judgment of the Church, might be pardoned on the man's private contrition, without any confession at all. Once more, the State has the guardianship of property, as the Church is the guardian of the faith:—in the Middle Ages, it is often objected, the Church put to death for heresy; well but, on the other hand, even in recent times, the State has put to death for forgery, nay, I suppose, for sheep-stealing. How distinct must be the measure of crime in Church and in State, when so heterogeneous is the rule of punishment in the one and in the other!

My brethren, you may think it impolitic in me thus candidly to state what may be so strange in the eyes of the world;—but not so, my dear brethren, just the contrary. The world already knows quite enough of our difference of judgment from it on the whole; it knows that difference also in its results; but it does not know that it is based on principle; it taunts the Church with that difference, as if nothing could be said for her,—as if it were not, as it is, a mere question of a balance of evils,—as if the Church had nothing to show for herself, were simply ashamed of her evident helplessness, and pleaded guilty to the charge of her inferiority to the world in the moral effects of her teaching. The world points to the children of the Church, and asks if she acknowledges them as her own. It dreams not that this contrast arises out of a difference of principle, and that she claims to act upon a principle higher than the world's. Principle is always respectable; even a bad man is more respected, though he may be more hated, if he owns and justifies his actions, than if he is wicked by accident; now the Church professes to judge after the judgment of the Almighty; and it cannot be imprudent or impolitical to bring this out clearly and boldly. His judgment is not as man's: "I judge not according to the look of

man," He says, "for man seeth those things which appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." The Church aims at realities, the world at decencies; she dispenses with a complete work, so she can but make a thorough one. Provided she can do for the soul what is necessary, if she can but pull the brands out of the burning, if she can but extract the poisonous root which is the death of the soul, and expel the disease, she is content, though she leaves in it lesser maladies, little as she sympathises with them.

## VII.

Now, were it to my present purpose to attack the principles and proceedings of the world, of course it would be obvious for me to retort upon the cold, cruel, selfish system, which this supreme worship of comfort, decency, and social order necessarily introduces; to show you how the many are sacrificed to the few, the poor to the wealthy, how an oligarchical monopoly of enjoyment is established far and wide, and the claims of want, and pain, and sorrow, and affliction, and guilt, and misery, are practically forgotten. But I will not have recourse to the commonplaces of controversy when I am on the defensive. All I would say to the world is,—Keep your theories to yourselves, do not inflict them upon the sons of Adam everywhere; do not measure heaven and earth by views which are in a great degree insular, and can never be philosophical and catholic. You do your work, perhaps, in a more business-like way, compared with ourselves, but we are immeasurably more tender and gentle and angelic than you. We come to poor human nature as the angels of God, and you as policemen. Look at your poorhouses, hospitals, and prisons; how perfect are their externals! what skill and ingenuity appear in their structure, economy, and administration! they are as decent, and bright, and calm, as what our Lord seems to

name them,—dead men's sepulchres. Yes! they have all the world can give—all but life; all but a heart. Yes! you can hammer up a coffin, you can plaster a tomb; you are nature's undertakers; you cannot build it a home. You cannot feed it or heal it; it lies, like Lazarus, at your gate, full of sores. You see it gasping and panting with privations and penalties; and you sing to it, you dance to it, you show it your picture-books, you let off your fire-works, you open your menageries. Shallow philosophers! is this mode of going on so winning and persuasive, that we should imitate it?

Look at your conduct towards criminals, and honestly say whether you expect a power which claims to be divine to turn copyist of you? You have the power of life and death committed to you by heaven; and some wretched being is sentenced to fall under it for some deed of treachery and blood. It is a righteous sentence, re-echoed by a whole people; and you have a feeling that the criminal himself ought to concur in it, and sentence himself. There is an universal feeling that he ought to resign himself to your act, and, as it were, take part in it; in other words, there is a sort of instinct among you that he should make confession, and you are not content without his doing so. So far the Church goes along with you. So far, but no farther. To whom is he to confess? To me, says the priest, for he has injured the Almighty. To me, says the world, for he has injured me. Forgetting that the power to sentence is simply from God, and that the sentence, if just, is God's sentence, the world is peremptory that no confession shall be made by the criminal to God, without itself being in the secret. It is right, doubtless, that that criminal should make reparation to man as well as to God; but it is not right that the world should insist on having precedence of its Maker, or should prescribe that its Maker should have no secrets apart from itself, or that no divine ministration should relieve a laden breast without its

meddling in the act. Yet the world rules it, that whatever is said to a minister of religion in religious confidence is its own property. It considers that a clergyman who attends upon the culprit to be its own servant, and by its boards of magistrates, and by its literary organs, it insists on his revealing to its judgment-seat what was uttered before the judgment-seat of God. What wonder, then, if such forlorn wretches, when thus plainly told that the world is their only god, and knowing that they are quitting the presence of that high potentate for ever, steel themselves with obduracy, encounter it with defiance, baffle its curiosity, and inflict on its impatience such poor revenge as is in its power? They come forth into the light, and look up into the face of day for the last time, and, amid the jests and blasphemies of myriads, they pass from a world which they hate into a world which they deny. Small mercies, indeed, has this world shown them, and they make no trial of the mercies of another!

### VIII.

O how contrary is the look, the bearing of the Catholic Church to these poor outcasts of mankind! There was a time, when one who denied his Lord was brought to repentance by a glance; and such is the method which His Church teaches to those nations who acknowledge her authority and her sway. The civil magistrate, stern of necessity in his function, and inexorable in his resolve, at her bidding, gladly puts on a paternal countenance, and takes on him an office of mercy towards the victim of his wrath. He infuses the ministry of life into the ministry of death; he afflicts the body for the good of the soul, and converts the penalty of human law into an instrument of everlasting bliss. It is good for human beings to die as infants, before they have known good or evil, if they have

but received the baptism of the Church ; but next to these, who are the happiest, who are the safest, for whose departure have we more cause to rejoice, and be thankful, than for theirs, who, if they live on, are so likely to relapse into old habits of sin, but who are taken out of this miserable world in the flower of their contrition, and in the freshness of their preparation ;—just at the very moment when they have perfected themselves in good dispositions, and from their heart have put off sin, and have come humbly for pardon, and have received the grace of absolution, and have been fed with the bread of Angels, and thus, amid the prayers of all men, have departed to their Maker and their Judge? I say, “the prayers of all” : for O, the difference, in this respect, in the execution of the extreme sentence of the law, between a Catholic State and another ! We have all heard of the scene of impiety and profaneness which attends on the execution of a criminal in England ; so much so, that benevolent and thoughtful men are perplexed between the evil of privacy and the outrages which publicity occasions. Well, England surpasses Rome in ten thousand matters of this world, but never would the Holy City tolerate an enormity which powerful England cannot hinder. An arch-confraternity was instituted there at the close of the fifteenth century, under the invocation of San Giovanni Decollato, that Holy Baptist, who lost his head by a king’s sentence, though an unjust one ; and it exercises its pious offices towards condemned criminals even now. When a culprit is to be executed, the night preceeding the fatal day, two priests of the brotherhood, who sometimes happen to be Bishops or persons of high authority in the city, remain with him in prayer, attend him on the scaffold the next morning, and assist him through every step of the terrible ceremonial of which he is the subject. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in all the churches all over the city, that the faithful may assist a sinner about to make a compulsory appearance before his Judge. The crowd about

the scaffold is occupied in but one thought, whether he has shown signs of contrition. Various reports are in circulation, that he is obdurate, that he has yielded, that he is obdurate still. The women cry out that it is impossible; Jesus and Mary will see to it; they will not believe that it is so; they are sure that he will submit himself to his God before he enters into His presence. However, it is perhaps confirmed that the unhappy man is still wrestling with his pride and hardness of heart; and though he has that illumination of faith which a Catholic cannot but possess, yet he cannot bring himself to hate and abhor sins which, except in their awful consequences, are, as far as their enjoyment, gone from him for ever. He cannot taste again the pleasure of revenge or of forbidden indulgence, yet he cannot get himself to give it up, though the world is passing from him. The excitement of the crowd is at its height; an hour passes; the suspense is intolerable, when the news is brought of a change; that, before the crucifix, in the solitude of his cell, at length, the—unhappy no longer—the happy criminal has subdued himself; has prayed with real self-abasement; has expressed, has felt, a charitable, a tender thought, towards those he has hated; has resigned himself lovingly to his destiny; has blessed the hand that smites him; has supplicated pardon; has confessed with all his heart, and placed himself at the disposal of his Priest, to make such amends as he can make in his last hour to God and man; has even desired to submit here to indignity, to pain, to which he is not sentenced; has taken on himself any length of purgatory hereafter, if thereby he may, through God's mercy, show his sincerity, and his desire of pardon and of gaining the lowest place in the kingdom of heaven. The news comes; it is communicated through the vast multitude all at once; and, I have heard from those who have been present, never shall they forget the instantaneous shout of joy which burst forth from every tongue, and formed itself into one concordant act of thanksgiving, in

acknowledgment of the grace vouchsafed to one so near eternity.

It is not wonderful then to find the holy men, who, from time to time, have done the pious office of preparing such criminals for death, so confident of their salvation. "So well convinced was Father Claver of the eternal happiness of almost all whom he assisted," says this saintly missionary's biographer, "that, speaking once of some persons who had in a bad spirit delivered a criminal into the hands of justice, he said, 'God forgive them; but they have secured the salvation of this man at the probable risk of their own.' Most of the criminals considered it a grace to die in the hands of this holy man. As soon as he spake to them the most savage and indomitable became gentle as lambs; and, in place of their ordinary imprecations, nothing was heard but sighs, and the sound of bloody disciplines, which they took before leaving the prison for execution."

But I must come to an end. I do not consider, my brethren, I have said all that might be said in answer to the difficulty which has come under our consideration; nor have I proposed to do so. Such an undertaking does not fall within the scope of these Lectures; it would be an inquiry into facts. It is enough if I have suggested to you one thought which may most materially invalidate the objection. You tell me, that the political and civil state of Catholic countries is below that of Protestant: I answer, that, even though you prove the fact, you have to prove something besides, if it is to be an argument for your purpose, viz., that the standard of civil prosperity and political aggrandizement is the truest test of grace and the largest measure of salvation.

