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Who Is A Hypocrite?

"Dear Father: There was an argument in our hall which ran somewhat as follows. One fellow objected to confession on the ground that he would again sin. His idea was to wait until he was firmly settled and rather sure that he would not sin again for a long while. He would then go to confession and consider it all right to have stayed away all that time. He would stay away, not because he was not sorry, not because he did not want to do better in the future, but because he felt that he could not do better in the future.

"Though the man, I think, should be admired for his hatred of hypocrisy, there must be something wrong with his line of reasoning. Please answer through the Bulletin.  
"A Student."

You will find an answer on page 14 of the pamphlet, "Objections to Daily Communion." The pertinent paragraph is No. 2, which reads as follows: "If you fear that you will commit sin in the future, if your knowledge of your weakness under past temptations leads you to believe that your will will not hold out, you should receive Holy Communion daily and make use of other means of grace to strengthen the will against future dangers. That fear is a judgment of the intellect; the determination not to commit sin is an act of the will, and it is the will that is primarily concerned in the purpose of amendment."

And there is another way of looking at it: Father Faber says of the one who puts off his conversion until his power of sinning is withered: "It is wretched enough to think of these conversions of old age, which seem to have more of nature in them than of grace. A man's passions are worked out. He becomes a moral wreck. The avenues of sensual pleasure are closed to him, by the aches and pains and dull insensibilities of age. In a number of cases, the very powers of sinning are diminished. And so, what with fear, what with disgust, and what with making a virtue of necessity, the old man gives himself to God, such little of him as is left, and God accepts the gift." - Creator and Creature, p. 326.

Your friend's idea of hypocrisy is all wrong. In Holy Communion he sees a parade of virtue, not a humble supplication for virtue; in confession he sees the boast of natural power in overcoming sin, not the cry of the penitent for the supernatural help that lies in absolution. The hypocrite pretends to a virtue he does not possess; the penitent suppliant strikes his breast and says with the Church: "Domine, non sum dignus," "Lord, I am not worthy... but with Thy grace make me more and more worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."

Jansenism struck deep roots in the heart of the Church. Pope Pius X tried to give it a death blow when he called Holy Communion an aid to virtue, not a reward for virtue, the Medicine of the weak as well as the Food for the strong, but there are still those who are deaf to his voice. Ask your friend to talk it over with a priest. If his dispositions are not right, the priest will not give him absolution; but the judgment of dispositions is the business of the priest more than of the penitent. Amateur theologians can make an awful mess of things, especially when they take their own medicine.

If behind this false theology your friend has a good heart, if he really wants to give the vigor of his youth to God instead of the Devil, suggest to him that he make a general confession and get a fresh start in the way of salvation, with a priest for his guide. It is seldom that one meets malice at Notre Dame, but of goofy ideas there seems to be no end. The fellow who realizes that he is a consummate quack when it comes to handling his own problems, and submits to the ministrations of a socialist, is on the high road to recovery.

ILL: Relatives of Ray Rouland and Norman Gehring.