

# ABSOLUTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

## THE VIEW OF ST. PACIANUS

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ALTHOUGH at present even grave offenses are ordinarily forgiven at the time of their confession, a study of the penitential usage of the early Church compels one to question whether the current discipline was always in force. The brunt of the written evidence seems to indicate that, apart from unwonted circumstances such as imminent death or persecution, the absolution, at least in the case of those undergoing public penance, was withheld until the lengthy satisfaction had been completed.<sup>1</sup> In this event, the sacramental procedure was as follows. The sinner first confessed his sin privately to the bishop and begged to be admitted among the penitents. The bishop, pondering the gravity of the revealed offense and all its circumstances, enjoined a proportionate period of public satisfaction and uttered a deprecatory prayer over the delinquent. On the future Holy Thursday which would conclude his penitential period,<sup>2</sup> the penitent again appeared before the bishop, this time publicly in the church, and the latter imposed hands upon and pronounced absolution over him and all others whose time of expiation expired on that day. Only then was the delinquent absolved either *in foro interno* or *in foro externo*. Only then was his soul purged of its iniquities and his right to share in all the benefits of the Church restored.

Some theologians are loath to concede that such was the actual practice of the Church.<sup>3</sup> They find here a disciplinary problem with

<sup>1</sup> Galtier, *De Paenitentia*, pp. 184-93, offers a sufficiently comprehensive treatment of this matter. He favors our view. For a briefer discussion of the subject, cf. Nerney, *De Paenitentia*, pp. 13-19. He agrees with Galtier.

<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence in St. Pacianus to indicate on what day the penitents of Barcelona were reconciled. The ordinary day in most of the Western Churches was Holy Thursday. However, at Milan and in Spain the evidence favors Good Friday. For a thorough elucidation of this question, cf. Morinus, *De Paenitentia*, pp. 691-95.

<sup>3</sup> Galtier, *De Paenitentia*, p. 185, says that this opinion is "apud theologos sat communem." Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae*, VII, 139, favors it: "Quare potius admitendum videtur formula illa, quae in ordinibus paenitentialibus omnibus statim post confessionem adhibenda praescribitur, paenitentes fuisse absolutos." The following authors

dogmatic implications. Could the Church, ever merciful to the sinner, have left him fettered by mortal sin for whole years together?<sup>4</sup> Would not such a discipline have jeopardized the very salvation of the penitent since sudden death might well have struck him down during the long interval preceding absolution?<sup>5</sup> Moreover, how could the unity of the sacrament have been preserved in some cases as, for instance, when confession was made to one bishop and absolution conferred, years later perhaps, and even in a different diocese, by another?<sup>6</sup> Finally, the same theologians are not without a posteriori evidence to support their view. A few brief patristic quotations seem to imply that sacramental absolution did precede the public penance.<sup>7</sup> The question, therefore, is undoubtedly a mooted one.

Making allowance for slight divergences, we may say that the authors who champion the bestowal of absolution before the fulfillment of the penance conceive the process of exomologesis as follows.<sup>8</sup> Two absolutions were ordinarily conferred upon the penitent. The first of these was administered at the time of acknowledgment of crime. It alone was truly sacramental; it was given privately and deleted the *reatus culpae*; it regained God's friendship for the sinner *in foro interno*. However, the Church's design in those ancient times was to extirpate every vestige of sin from the soul; the sacrament of penance like that of baptism was not to be deemed complete until it effaced the *reatus*

adopt the same view: Pignataro, *De Paenitentia*, p. 104; Palmieri, *De Paenitentia*, p. 459; Frank, *Die Bussdisciplin der Kirche*, p. 828; Hurter, *Theologiae Dogmaticae Compendium*, III, 492, note; Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> This notion is expressed by Bickell, "Zur Geschichte der Beichte im Orient während der ersten vier Jahrhunderte," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, I (1877), 414; "Es ist doch schon an sich fast undenkbar, dass man die Büsser während der vielen Jahre, die sie oft in den beiden ersten Stationen zubringen mussten, im Zustand der Todsünde gelassen habe!"

<sup>5</sup> Nerney, *De Paenitentia*, p. 18, disposes of this objection in a few words: "Easdem dilationes permittebat [Ecclesia] in catechumenatu. Caeterum omnia utrimque ita disponebantur ut facile tum paenitentes tum catechumeni ad caritatem eveherentur."

<sup>6</sup> Galtier, *De Paenitentia*, p. 192, solves this difficulty: "Etsi reconciliatio non fiebat nisi diu post 'petitam' et 'datam' paenitentiam, tamen reconcilianti sacerdoti sufficiens competeat paenitentis cognitio. Publica siquidem paenitentia quasi continuata confessio reputabatur; illius praeposito constare debebat de peccato propter quod imposita erat."

<sup>7</sup> They may be found in Galtier, *De Paenitentia*, pp. 185-86.

<sup>8</sup> Vacandard, "Absolution," *DTC*, I, 156-57, gives the broad outlines of this theory.

*poenae temporalis* as well as the guilt itself. Consequently, upon the expiration of the assigned time of public penance a second public absolution was pronounced. It was not sacramental, since the *reatus culpae* had already been remitted. It merely signified to the community and to the transgressor that he was restored to legitimate standing in the Church and that his humble toleration of the imposed stringent penalties had been such that even the traces of temporal punishment had been obliterated. Such in brief is the outline of this theory.

However, we believe that the preponderance of patristic testimony sides with those who aver that the sacramental absolution was granted only after the public penance had been performed. Morinus has amassed an overwhelming number of quotations to substantiate this view.<sup>9</sup> Scholars of the highest qualifications have agreed with him.<sup>10</sup> No question can arise as to the dogmatic implications of their opinion, since it is a matter of discipline which could conform to the definitions of faith. True, it does contrast strangely with current usage and jars our traditional sensibilities, but it does not appear to infringe upon dogma. Hence the entire matter should be left to the findings of the historian of dogma.<sup>11</sup> The latter may not be satisfied with mere iso-

<sup>9</sup> *De Paenitentia*, pp. 611-25. He offers citations from Clement of Rome, Hermas Tertullian, Cyprian, Peter of Alexandria, Ambrose, Pacian, Augustine, and others.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. O'Donnell, *Penance in the Early Church*, pp. 110 ff.; Batiffol, *Études d'histoire et de théologie positive*, pp. 160-61; Hogan, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 1900, p. 433; Petavius, *De Vetere in Ecclesia Paenitentiae Ratione Diatriba*, c. 6, p. 196, and also in *Diatriba de Paenitentia et Reconciliatione*, c. 3, p. 450. We believe some of the pronouncements of those advocating this side of the question are too categorical. For instance, Vacandard, *Études de critique et d'histoire religieuse*, p. 95, declares: "D'une part, en effet, les documents sur la pénitence, très nombreux dans l'antiquité ecclésiastique, ne contiennent aucune allusion à cette absolution sacramentelle, qui est pensée précéder les exercices pénitentiels." Rauschen also, *Eucharist and Penance*, p. 220, asserts: "The sources of antiquity are silent concerning a regular sacramental absolution preceding the completion of the imposed penance."

<sup>11</sup> D'Alès, though he did not consider the question settled, is partial to the opinion that the absolution was granted only after the penance. Some of his statements are illuminating. In his *Édit de Calliste*, p. 439, he writes: "Faut-il admettre avec de graves auteurs, que l'absolution sacramentelle précédait normalement l'accomplissement de la pénitence publique? Malgré les raisons dont on l'appuie, cette hypothèse ne me paraît guère recevable dans son universalité, car les anciennes descriptions de la pénitence publique donnent irrésistiblement cette impression que les pénitents, loin de se considérer comme absous au for intérieur, luttent douloureusement pour mériter d'être absous." Again in

lated citations. Each individual Father who deals with penance must be diligently studied and judiciously interpreted. When this has been accomplished, the problem will perhaps be definitely solved.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF ST. PACIANUS

The present paper undertakes to examine the writings of one Father, St. Pacianus, and to show the reason for believing that he granted sacramental absolution only after the public satisfaction had been undergone.<sup>12</sup>

Put briefly, the reason is simply this: St. Pacianus portrays public penitents, not as already reconciled to God, but as seeking such reconciliation. Consider, for instance, the following passage. Sympronianus, his Novatian adversary and correspondent, had just objected to St. Pacianus that, if grave sins were remitted by absolution, baptism would no longer be a *necessitas medii* for salvation. The objection strikes us as frivolous. St. Pacianus, too, was irked by its

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the same work, p. 382, he declares: "La difficulté est grande pour nous de suivre la distinction entre ces deux réalités que les siècles précédents avaient disjointes: l'admission à la pénitence et la réconciliation effective. Autrefois, un temps plus ou moins long s'écoulait normalement entre l'une et l'autre." His view is further revealed in the same work, p. 383: "Nous n'irons pas jusqu'à soutenir avec de nombreux auteurs que telle fut, dès une date ancienne, la pratique normale de l'Église, et qu'en admettant les pécheurs à pénitence elle entendait les réconcilier déjà au for intérieur; mais rien ne l'empêchait d'agir ainsi au besoin, et l'imminence de la mort était, de tous les besoins, le plus impérieux." In his *Théologie de Tertullien*, p. 348, he interprets Tertullian to say that the absolution was granted only after the penance. Speaking of the three phases of the sacrament, he says the first was a secret confession made to the bishop, and then continues: "Les deux autres [phases] étaient publiques: d'abord l'exomologèse, satisfaction extérieure et protestation de repentir devant Dieu et devant l'Église: puis la sentence épiscopale, qui, en mettant fin à la pénitence publique, réconciliait à Dieu le pénitent bien disposé, obtenant ainsi son *plein effet au for intérieur en même temps qu'au for extérieur*." He interprets Cyprian the same way in *Théologie de Saint Cyprien*, p. 278: "Il n'y a pas trace chez Cyprien de l'absolution que de graves auteurs ont parfois supposée au début de la pénitence ecclésiastique."

<sup>12</sup> St. Pacianus was Bishop of Barcelona in Spain for the greater part of the fourth century. His five extant works comprise the *Sermo de Baptismo*, a sermon addressed to catechumens, three letters directed to a Novatian by the name of Sympronianus, and the *Paraenesis ad Paenitentiam*, a kind of pastoral letter addressed to his flock. The last four works have established St. Pacianus as one of the four great authorities on the subject of penance in the Western Church. A satisfactory edition of his writings may be found in Migne, *PL*, XIII, 1051-94. References to the *Letters* will be designated by *I L.*, *II L.*, *III L.*; to the *Paraenesis*, by *PP.* All translations in this article are the author's.

frivolity, calling it a "most ridiculous comparison,"<sup>13</sup> but he does, notwithstanding, go on to explain the difference between baptism and penance:

For baptism is the sacrament of the Lord's passion: the pardon granted to penitents is the merit of the one confessing. Every man can receive baptism, because it is a gift proceeding from God's liberality, that is to say, it is a purely gratuitous gift; but the toil of penance is reserved for those few who rise up after their fall, who regain their health after being wounded, who are succored by tearful prayers, who are restored to life by the destruction of the flesh.<sup>14</sup>

Here we have depicted in brief compass a few of the characteristics of public penance which St. Pacianus describes at greater length elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> The penitent is portrayed as one getting up after a fall, as a convalescent not yet recuperated, as one being reanimated by bodily mortifications. These expressions appear to represent the penitent as not yet absolved, but we would not insist upon this. Rather we would stress the distinction made between baptism and penance. Baptism is for all and wins remission of sin without effort on the part of the recipient. It is a "gratuita donatio." But the pardon granted to penitents (*venia paenitentium*) is only for a few (*paucorum*), i.e., for sinners, and is the result of their own endeavors (*meritum confitentis*). It is not a "gratuita donatio," but a "labor." It is another avenue leading to reconciliation with God just as baptism does, but it is a rough and rocky avenue that must be traversed by the penitent. Now we ask: Could St. Pacianus have so designated the sacrament of confession if the sins were forgiven at the time of their avowal? He must have been aware that even the adult catechumen would have to

<sup>13</sup> "Insulsissima comparatio" (*III L.*, c. 8).

<sup>14</sup> "Baptismus enim, sacramentum est dominicae passionis: paenitentium venia, meritum confitentis. Illud omnes adipisci possunt, quia gratiae Dei donum est; id est, gratuita donatio: labor vero iste, paucorum est qui post casum resurgunt, qui post vulnera convalescunt, qui lacrimosis vocibus adjuvantur, qui carnis interitu reviviscunt" (*III L.*, c. 8). In *I L.*, c. 5, the bishop ranks penance also among the "gratuita Domini bona." Penance is gratuitous in the sense that we would not have it as a sacrament except for the bounty of Christ, who instituted it. Baptism is gratuitous in this sense, and also in an additional one, since its effect emanates from God solely. Penance, however, requires the active co-operation of the recipient for the attainment of its effects. The expression "carnis interitu" is taken from St. Paul and is used elsewhere by St. Pacianus: cf. *III L.*, c. 7: "interitu carnis emendat," and *PP.*, c. 10: "Ubi est vestrae carnis interitus?"

<sup>15</sup> Cf. especially *PP.*, cc. 9-12, where he treats professedly of this matter.

be attrite, at least, before receiving baptism, and yet he calls baptism a "gratuita donatio." The "labor," therefore, exacted from the confessional applicant could not have been mere internal sorrow, though that would have been sufficient according to contemporary practice and doctrine. No, it is something more, much more—it is the public penance, the "interitus carnis," the "lacrimosae voces."<sup>16</sup> In baptism sins are remitted without this penance; in confession they are not. It is not a "gratuita donatio" which cleanses the soul like the baptismal laving; it is a "donatio," but one that postulates labor and mortification to secure its effect, and the sinner may not be absolved until that strenuous work has been completed.<sup>17</sup>

That the forgiveness of mortal sin is contingent on the efforts of the penitent is evinced also from the ensuing text of the *Paraenesis*. In what may be called the preface of this work, St. Pacianus remarks that his words are going to be pertinent to his entire auditory: to the catechumens, lest they cross over to the penitential state after their spiritual rebirth; to the faithful, lest they lapse into it; and, finally, "to the penitents themselves, that they may submit to the necessary hardships with a view to reaping their fruit in quick time."<sup>18</sup> These latter must strive and toil and drudge (*laborandum*). And to what purpose must this be done? That they may arrive speedily at the fruit of their penitential exercises. This fruit can only be the reconciliation of the penitents with God by the final absolution. St. Pacianus pictures the penitent as toiling in his penance; he pictures this toil as an obligation; he declares that only through the instrumentality of this toil will the penitent attain its fruit, which is forgiveness. In

<sup>16</sup> This expression refers not only to the tears of the penitent, but also to those of the congregation. St. Pacianus conceived the faithful as helping in the procural of pardon.

<sup>17</sup> Morinus, *De Paenitentia*, p. 144, invokes the preceding text from St. Pacianus to show that the absolution followed the penance. After quoting the citation, he makes this comment: "Quanta inter utrumque peccatum a Paciano constituitur differential! Quam facilis et unicuique Deo juvante parabilis ante baptismum paenitentia peccatorum! Post baptismum quam difficilis, quam laboriosa et molesta!"

<sup>18</sup> "Praeterea nullus existimet hunc ipsum de Paenitentiae institutione sermonem solis tantummodo paenitentibus ordinatum; ne propter hoc quisquis extra hunc gradum positus est, ea quaecumque dicentur, velut in alios destinata fastidiat, cum in hanc quasi fibulam totius Ecclesiae disciplina notetur, quando, et Catechumenis, ne in hoc transeant; et fidelibus, ne in hoc redeant, providendum sit; *ipsis vero paenitentibus, ut celeriter ad hujus operis fructum perveniant, laborandum*" (PP., c. 2).

short, the penitent is sketched as yet enmeshed in his sins. He is exerting himself for a purpose, but the purpose will not be achieved until the exertions are completed. He is not yet restored to God's friendship.

This vivid representation of a penitent sweating from oppressive "labor" recurs in other passages. But though the brunt of the work devolves upon him personally, yet his brethren also share in it and struggle with him to gain forgiveness. In a later passage of the *Paraenesis*, St. Pacianus directs a paragraph of exhortation to those who are ashamed to be humiliated by penance in the presence of the congregation. He offers various motives to strengthen them against this unreasonable timidity. The sinner should not waver when the choice for him lies between everlasting life and momentary shame.<sup>19</sup> He should not be concerned with his own embarrassment when he has offended the Lord of all.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, his brethren will show only commiseration for his misfortune:

But if you quail before the looks of your brethren, have no fear of them since they will compassionate your miseries. No body rejoices in the afflictions of its members; it weeps in sympathy and co-operates in effecting the cure. The Church is in the body and in the member; but Christ is in the Church. So it happens that the man who does not conceal his sins from his brethren is aided by the prayers of the Church and is absolved by the intercession of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

This additional fact, that the rest of the brethren are said to "co-labor" (*collaborat*)<sup>22</sup> with the penitent, lends force to our general proposition that the absolution was administered only after the penitential exercises had been terminated. The malefactor had already made his confession privately to the bishop and had been enrolled among the penitents. If absolution had been accorded at the time of confession, what need would there be for this earnest and public co-operation of the community—a co-operation, moreover, which aims

<sup>19</sup> "Peccator erubescet, perpetuam vitam praesenti pudore mercari" (*PP.*, c. 8).

<sup>20</sup> "Et habet aliquid quod in illo erubescat, qui Dominum laesit?" (*PP.*, c. 8).

<sup>21</sup> "Quod si fratrum oculos erubescitis; consortes casuum vestrorum timere nolite. Nullum corpus membrorum suorum vexatione laetatur; pariter dolet, et ad remedium *collaborat*. In uno et altero, Ecclesia est; in Ecclesia vero, Christus. Atque ideo qui fratribus peccata sua non tacet, Ecclesiae lacrimis adjutus, Christi precibus absolvitur" (*PP.*, c. 8). Peyrot inserts *immo* before *pariter*.

<sup>22</sup> This notion of the congregation helping in the cure of the penitent is referred to quite frequently in St. Pacianus: cf. *III L.*, cc. 12, 5, 15; *PP.*, c. 12.

at effecting a remedy or cure for the penitent (*ad remedium*)? How explain the statement that it is only after the assistance rendered by the common prayers of the brethren (*Ecclesiae precibus adjutus*) that the delinquent is absolved by the intercession of Christ (*Christi precibus absolvitur*)? There can be no quibble here about mere re-admission to full communion in the Church. It is Christ Himself, not the Church, who will mainly do the pardoning, and hence St. Pacianus must have the *reatus culpae* in mind. But this pardon is portrayed as the ultimate act of the penitential process; it follows the public humiliation, the courageous submission to the imposed penalties, the united invocations of the brethren. Hence it would appear that forgiveness was unattainable until after the public penance had been fulfilled.

Yet another passage from St. Pacianus demonstrates that the Bishop of Barcelona did not regard the public penitents as already blessed with God's friendship. Objecting against the remission of mortal sin, Sympronianus had declared that repeated forgiveness would prove a door to repeated sin.<sup>23</sup> St. Pacianus retorts that a doctor in the healing process does not thereby instruct a patient to fall sick again; that a man who rescues another from the flames does not teach him to trifle with fire, that one who saves a victim of shipwreck from the reefs does not drive him onto the reefs in the future.<sup>24</sup> Applying these metaphors to the sacrament of penance, he continues:

And perhaps I might tolerate this opinion if penance were considered a pleasure—penance, which necessitates burdensome toil, which enjoins mortification of the flesh, which involves incessant tears and everlasting sighs. Will, therefore, the healed sinner desire to undergo the knife a second time, or to be cauterized again? Will he desire to sin again and do penance again, since it is written: 'Sin no more lest some worse evil befall thee'?<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "Si Deus saepius jubet hominem paenitere, saepius peccare permittit" (*III L.*, c. 9).

<sup>24</sup> "Ergo qui saepius remedium criminis monstrat, crimen ostendit? Et medicus ille cum curat assidue vulnerari docet? Deus nec peccare vult hominem semel, et tamen liberat a peccato. Nec utique cum liberat, peccatum docet; sicut nec qui ab incendio liberat, incendium monstrat; nec qui naufragum eripit scopulis, in saxa compellit" (*III L.*, c. 9).

<sup>25</sup> "Et fortasse paterer hoc credi, si paenitentia deliciae putarentur; cujus tantus labor imponitur, cui carnis interitus imperatur, cui juges lacrimae, cui gemitus sempiterni. Volet ergo ille sanatus iterum se secari, rursus exuri? Volet iterum peccare, et iterum paenitere, cum scriptum sit: 'Noli adjicere peccatum, ne quid tibi deterius contingat'?" (*III L.*, c. 9).

Here again we have a vivid description of the severe nature of the public penance as well as of its absolute necessity, but our argument does not rest upon these facts alone. That forgiveness begets iteration of sin is the gist of Sympronianus' complaint. How does St. Pacianus retort? He states that the forgiveness is not easy. The delinquent must undergo public penance, which entails toil, mortification, persistent tears, and unending laments. Once the victim has borne this punishment, he is not likely to sin again, knowing that in so doing he will subject himself to a repetition of the same painful process. Now if, as a matter of fact, the *reatus culpae* had been removed at the time of confession, St. Pacianus could hardly have adopted such a refutation of the objection advanced. His manner of speaking indicates that the performance of the penalties was a *conditio sine qua non* of obtaining remission. Nothing he says intimates that he viewed it as a sacramental complement, the neglect of which would involve the commission of a second grave sin entirely distinct from the original confessed transgressions. No, he is dealing with the past sins already declared to the bishop; he wishes to make it clear that their remission will not jeopardize the future moral conduct of the penitent. No such danger exists because the torments of the public penance, by which remission is gained, are so excruciating that no penitent will run the risk of enduring them a second time.<sup>26</sup>

The justice of this conclusion is further confirmed by the statements of St. Pacianus immediately following those quoted above. Suppose, he says, that we bar all hopes of forgiveness to the sinner:

What, I ask, is the sinner going to do, if the possibility of doing penance is denied him? if his entire wound is to lie festering through despair of ever finding a remedy? if the hope of regaining life is thoroughly and unequivocally quenched?<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Morinus develops his argument from this same citation in a different way. He says that if the absolution had been granted before the public reparation, Sympronianus' protest would have been valid and forgiveness would have been rather an incitement to sin than a deterrent from it. St. Pacianus would have been unable to respond in this case. We must confess that we doubt the soundness of this reasoning. At the present time absolution is conferred easily and immediately after confession, and yet the sacrament does not thereby prove an instigation to continued wrongdoing, though this precise objection is frequently on the lips of non-Catholics.

<sup>27</sup> "Quid tandem ille facturus est, cui paenitentia ipsa praecluditur; cui, desperato remedio, totum vulnus operitur; cui prorsus ex integro vitae aditus denegatur?" (*III L.*, c. 9).

It is an argument *ad hominem*: You, Sympronianus, claim that the opportunity to cleanse one's soul through penance is an incentive to renew one's sinful ways. I say that the denial of this opportunity would bring about that lamentable effect, since the sinner would despair of his salvation.

No suspicion may be engendered here as to the significance of the word "paenitentia" in the foregoing citation. The entire chapter has to do with the public penance. It is the "paenitentia" which bears no pleasure with it, which involves "labor," "juges lacrimae," "gemitus sempiterni." Fancy now that all access to this public penance is prohibited to the sinner. What will be his condition? He will be without any way to sound moral health, since the highway of penance is effectually, entirely, and irrevocably barred. It would be idle to maintain that so gloomy and forlorn a picture of the rejected applicant for penance might simply depict a sinner who had been forgiven by God, but who might never again be at peace with the Church. Take away the arduous exercises of public penance, and the aspirations of the sinner for forgiveness go glimmering. Such appears to be the purport of St. Pacianus' words. Not only is the performer of public penance viewed as not yet reconciled with God, but if a delinquent is debarred from such penance, he never will be so reconciled. If absolution had been granted at the time of confession, St. Pacianus could never have created these two impressions.

By way of recapitulation we may condense the arguments of the preceding pages as follows:

1) It is much more difficult to obtain remission of sin by penance than by baptism. The reason assigned for this by St. Pacianus is that in penance the public reparation must be made. Hence we infer that the absolution was conferred only upon completion of the penance.

2) The public penitent is represented as toiling assiduously to achieve a purpose. From the object of the *Paraenesis*, as well as from the bishop's other writings, we conclude that this purpose can be only the remission of the *reatus culpa*. This, therefore, was not removed until the expiration of the atonement.

3) The faithful co-operate with the penitent in his labors by praying for him. This co-operation would appear superfluous if the penitent had already been absolved. Besides, St. Pacianus states that the out-

come of this co-operation will be the forgiveness of sin through the mediation of Christ.

4) Pardon for sin will not open the gates to future sin because the pardon is contingent upon the fulfillment of a most distasteful public penance; and, if admission to this penance were gainsaid, the sinner would be driven to utter despair. Such declarations are incompatible with the notion that an efficacious absolution had been accorded at the time of confession.

Such is part of the evidence from St. Pacianus to indicate that he, at any rate, granted absolution only upon the expiration of the public penance.