

Jesuit Doctrine

These notes are based on a series of letters written by Blaise Pascal from Paris, France during 1656-57. They were written to Father Annat, a friend of Pascal, who lived in Port Royal. Both of these gentlemen shared a common interest - theology. It was this common interest, coupled with the religious persecution of Father Annat (a Jansenist), that lead Pascal to turn his considerable skills of discernment toward the Jesuits - who were the source of the persecution. The quotes are those of a local Jesuit Father and close friend of Pascal responding to Pascal's queries.

Pascal is, perhaps, best known for his discoveries in the field of hydraulics and pneumatics. His writings can be found in *'Great Books of the Western World'* - Vol.33, Published by Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 55-10340.

1. **PROBABLE OPINIONS** (p.3) - The Jesuit doctrine of probable opinions teaches that you are accountable *not* to scripture as the final authority, but to any opinion of a recognized Jesuit Scholar - even if that opinion is only 'probable.' A probable opinion is one that has a rational for it. Not necessarily a correct or even a good attempt at a rational - just a rational.
2. **ASSASSINATION** (p.36) - Although assassins were not allowed sanctuary in churches by a bull of Pope Gregory XIV, the Jesuits got around this by redefining the word assassin. Jesuits redefine assassins as those who "have received money to commit murder; and, accordingly, such as kill without taking any reward for the deed, but merely to oblige their friends, do not come under the category of assassins."
3. **PRIESTLY ADULTERY** (p.37) - "our casuists, notwithstanding, put it as a question, 'On what occasions may a monk lay aside his religious habits without incurring excommunication?' They mention a number of cases in which they may, and among others the following: 'If he has laid it aside for an infamous purpose, such as to pick pockets or to go incognito into haunts of profligacy, meaning shortly to resume it.' It is evident that bulls have no reference to cases of that description."
4. **AUTHORITY** (p.41) - "In matters of morality we are to follow, not the ancient fathers, but the modern casuists" (Cillot and Reginald). "Beyond all dispute, a monk who has a probable opinion of his own, is not bound to obey his superior, though the opinion of the latter is the more probable. For the monk is at liberty to adopt the opinion which is the more agreeable to himself" (Palao, Sanchez).
5. **THEFT** (p.42) - "...our four and twenty fathers have specified the services which they may render with a safe conscience; such as 'caring letters and presents, opening doors and windows, helping their master to reach the window, holding the ladder which he is mounting. All this, say they, allowable and indifferent; it is true that, as to holding the ladder, they must be threatened, more than usually, with being punished for refusing; for it is doing an injury to the master of the house to enter it by the window."

"This partiality to the poor has induced our great Vasquez, cited by Castro Palao, to say that 'if one saw a thief going to rob a poor man, it would be lawful to divert him from his purpose by pointing out to him some rich individual, whom he might rob in place of the other.'"

“No person is bound, either by the law of nature or by positive laws (that is, by any law), to make restitution of what has been gained by committing a criminal action, such as adultery, even though that action is contrary to justice.” (Lessius).

6. **DIRECTING THE INTENTION** (p.44) - “But when a person is not of such a wretched disposition as this, we try to put in practice our method of ‘directing the intention,’ which simply consists in his proposing to himself, as the end of his actions, some allowable object. Not that we do not endeavor, as far as we can, to dissuade men from doing things forbidden; but when we cannot prevent this action, we at least purify the motive, and thus correct the viciousness of the means by the goodness of the end. Such is the way in which our fathers have contrived to permit those acts of violence to which men usually resort in vindication of their honor. They have no more to do than to turn off their intention from the desire of vengeance, which is criminal, and direct it to a desire to protect their honor, which, according to us is quite warrantable. And in this way our doctors discharge all their duty toward God and towards man. By permitting the action, they gratify the world; and by purifying the intention, they give satisfaction to the Gospel. This is a secret, sir, which was entirely unknown to the ancients; the world is indebted for the discovery entirely to our doctors.”
7. **MURDER JUSTIFIED** (p.47) - “there is nothing to prevent one from dispatching one’s adversary in a private way. Indeed, in the circumstances referred to it is advisable to avoid employing the method of the duel, if it is possible to settle the affair by privately killing our enemy; for, by this means, we escape at once from exposing our life in the combat, and from participating in the sin which our opponent would have committed by fighting the duel!” (Sanchez).

“according to Father Baldelle, quoted by Escobar, ‘you may lawfully take the life of another for saying, “You have told a lie;” if there is no other way of shutting his mouth.’ The same may be done in the case of slanderers.
8. **BRIBES JUSTIFIED** (p.58) - “It is on this principle that the most celebrated of our writers have formally decided that the bribe received by the judge from one of the parties who has a bad case, in order to procure an unjust decision in his favor... may be legitimately retained.”
9. **SORCERY** (p.60) - “It is because men may truly divine by the aid of the devil, whereas astrology is a mere sham.”

“If the magician be ignorant of the diabolical art - si sit artis diabolicoe ignarus - he is bound to restore: but if he is an expert sorcerer, and has done all in his power to arrive at the truth, the obligation ceases; for the industry of such a magician may be estimated at a certain sum of money.”
10. **SLOTHFULNESS** (p.67) - “‘Sloth’ lies in grieving that spiritual things are spiritual...I must confess that it is very rarely that a person falls into the sin of sloth.’ You see now how important it is to define things properly?” (Jesuit Father quoting Escobar).
11. **GLUTTONY** (p.67) - “‘Is it allowable for a person to eat and drink to repletion, unnecessarily, and solely for pleasure?’ Certainly he may, according to Sanchez, provided that he does not thereby injure his health; because his natural appetite may be permitted to enjoy its proper functions...But, according to the same author, it would be a

venial sin 'were a person to gorge himself, unnecessarily, with eating and drinking, to such a degree as to produce vomiting'"

12. **LYING** (p.68) - "A man may swear that he never did such a thing (though he actually did it), meaning within himself that he did not do so on a certain day, or before he was born, or understanding any such other circumstance, while the words he employs have no such sense as would discover his meaning. And this is very convenient in many cases, and quite innocent, when necessary or conducive to one's health, honor, or advantage."(Sanchez).

"And he (Filiutius) suggests a still surer method for avoiding falsehood, which is this: After saying aloud, 'I swear,' to interpose a whisper, 'that I say,' and then continue aloud, 'that I have done that.' This, you perceive, is telling the truth."

13. **GAMBLING** (p.70) - "But," continued the monk, "just to show you how careful our fathers are about everything you can think of, I may mention that, after granting the ladies permission to gamble, and foreseeing that, in many cases, this license would be of little avail unless they had something to gamble with, they have established another maxim in their favor, which will be found in Escobar's chapter on larceny, no, 13: 'A wife,' says he, 'may gamble, and for this purpose may pilfer money from her husband.'"