

Franck Puaux on Indulgences (1859)

Endnote 4, page 17, "Old tariffs of indulgences and absolutions of the Roman Church," Franck Puaux, *Histoire de la Réformation Française* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1859), 1:406-07; translated by Thomas P. Johnston (August 2005)

"On the subject of indulgences, we have chosen to respond to the authors of *l'Univers* [The Universe], this great placater of falsehoods, the same who becomes indignant when we attribute to the papacy the medallion commemorating the Saint Bartholomew [day massacre], having heretofore (on 23 May 1854) *treated as a Protestant invention* the Catholic tariff of penitences, or absolutions for each crime, whatever it be, was valued in terms of cash payment. We do not think it unuseful herein to consider certain details.

The Protestant invention as claimed by *l'Univers*, is the book entitled: "*Taxe des parties casuelles de la boutique du pape, en latin et en français, avec annotations précises des décrets, conciles et canons, vieux et modernes, pour la vérification de la discipline anciennement observée dans l'Eglise*" ["tax of the casuistic parties of the Papal shop, in Latin and in French, with precise annotations of decrees, councils, and canons, ancient and modern, for the verification of the observance of the old discipline in the Church"] (Lyon's 8th edition, 1564).

That this work was published by a Protestant, this is unconscionable. It is the conscientious author, Antoine du Pinet, sieur de Nauroy, who edited it, after having embraced the Reformed religion. But it is not a question of playing with words. This edition of the Roman tax was it unique? Was it without precedent? Du Pinet was he the author of the origination of this work? Did he invent it, in the end? For that is the question. Thus here is the answer:

The Catholics, says *France Protestante* (4:44), wanted to deny the authenticity of this hideous tax, and pretended that it had never been sanctioned by the Roman court. But we responded to them that if the Popes disapproved and condemned this horrible tariff, as they claim, there would not have been any printed after 1471, date of the first edition published in Rome, with so many successive reprints, not only in Cologne (in 1515 and 1522), in Paris (en 1520, 4th ed., 1531, 1533, 1545, 16th ed.), in Venice (in 1532 and 1584), but also in Rome itself (1486, 1492, 1503, 1508, 1509, 1512, 1514), without speaking of the two editions without date, published between 1472 and 1486, under the eyes of Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, Alexander VI, Pius III, Julius II, and Leo X. There is nothing more authentic than this tax that rates absolution for murder, incest, theft, abominable crimes, at nearly the same price as the transgression of ecclesiastical law on fasting and abstinence of meats, in-other-words several *écus* [1 *écu* (crown) equals approximately 3 pounds].

One must add that du Pinet, far from exaggerating, did not even reproduce all the abominations contained in the original Latin of which diverse critics criticize him, thinking that he was doing a favor to omit the most despicable portions. But Bayle conjectures that in all probability he followed the edition that the Protestant princes had inserted into the *Centum gravamina*.

Is it now time to explain how and why *l'Univers*, having to choose from so many original texts that are poking out their eyes, decides to take a translation that it considers a Protestant invention?

One sees, by this new example that one cannot believe the word of *l'Univers* and their cohorts when they award French Protestantism with the certificate of invention and others. But they keep therefore what belongs to them alone and that they are so effective in exploiting, not without the guarantee of to whom it belongs (*Bulletin de l'Histoire du protestantism*, year 1854, page 210).

Ibid., 15-17.

We have traced the portrait of the papacy following natural [means], in-other-words following the sure principles of history; but we have omitted one fact that characterizes it. This fact brings to light the too celebrated book of *Taxe de la chancellerie Romaine* [Tax of the Roman Ministry]. This book all by itself accuses Rome more than all the writings of the Protestants. Therein, every sin had its price, every crime its rate.

Far from us in the mean time the idea of rendering guilty all the Church for the depravity in the Roman court. However interrelated in her shame, not everyone participated in all her iniquities. By the grace of God, in these times of ignorance and of spiritual slumber, there were simple and pious souls who did not walk with the multitude. In those days of moral decadence, there were the Elijah's and the Elisha's and the Shunnamite who afflicted their righteous souls, like Lot afflicted his in the guilty towns on the plain. On occasion fervent women like Thérèse, holy men like Gerson, raised their voices against the ruling godlessness. But, alas! their voices were little

heard; but when pious preachers were able to make themselves heard, the masses pressed in around their pulpits. Rome then alarmed itself and attacked the Protestants of this period with sticks and the burning stake. Thanks to its violent methods, she made silence around her and was able to hurl into the world around her the too celebrated book of *Taxes of the Roman Ministry*.

The papacy repudiates today this book that she would not now be able to use, but she published it. It came from her presses, and is nothing more than the consequence of her being, and is the action by which she maximized [proved] her works.

Here are several extracts of this work. We will cite only several appetizers. Leaving by the wayside the big sins: our ears would not easily accept their reading.

“Absolution for the one who reveals the confession of any penitent is taxed at seven *carlins*.¹

“Absolution for the one who abuses a young girl is taxed at six *carlins*.

“Absolution for a priest who lives with a concubine is taxed at seven *carlins*.

“Absolution for a lay person guilty of the same is taxed at eight *carlins*.

“Absolution for the one who has killed his father, his mother, his brother, his sister, his wife, or any other relative or associate, being a lay person, is taxed at five *carlins*.

“Absolution for a current lay person who has killed an Abbot or another ecclesiastic inferior to a Bishop, is taxed at seven, eight, or nine *carlins*.

“Absolution for a husband who strikes his wife in such a way that she has an abortion or a pre-term delivery, is taxed at eight *carlins*.

“Absolution for a woman who takes any remedy to cause her to have an abortion, or who does anything else with the design of causing the fetus to perish, is taxed at five *carlins*.

“The father, the mother, or whatever other relative who suffocates a child, will pay for each murder four *tournois*,² one *ducat*,³ eight *carlins*.

“The one who has committed anyone of these crimes (blasphemies [lit. *sacrilèges*], thefts, arsons, perjury, or other similar) is fully absolved, and his honor reestablished in every form and without forfeiture, comes to thirty-six *tournois* and nine *ducats*.

“The absolution for all acts of impurity, of whatever nature they may be, committed by a [religious] clerk, be it with a nun, in the cloister or elsewhere, or with his/her parents or relatives, or with a spiritual daughter, or with another woman, whomever that may be; being that the absolution be requested not simply by the clerk, or by he himself or his concubines, with the exemption of being able to keep his orders [religious position] and of holding its benefits, and with no claim of forfeiture, costs only thirty-six *tournois* and nine *ducats*.

“Absolution for a lay person for the crime of adultery given for the inner heart of his conscience, costs four *tournois*.

“A religious woman who has fallen several times in the sin of luxury [i.e. coveting things] will be absolved and will be reestablished in her order, even if she is the *abesse* [superior of a female abbey], comes to thirty-six *tournois*, nine *ducats*.

“Absolution for a priest who keeps a concubine, with the exemption to keep his orders and to hold its benefits, costs twenty-one *tournois*, five *ducats*, six *carlins*.

“If there is adultery and incest one the part of lay people, they will need to pay for each head six *tournois*.

“Permission to eat milk products when it is forbidden [prohibited] costs, for only one person, six *tournois*.”

In reading this shameful taxation, we think that we are dreaming, and we ask ourselves how the church of Rome, so pure and beautiful at its start, was able to degenerate to that extent.

Like Thyatira and Laodicea, she had, alas!

¹The *carlin* is an Italian currency of varying value (*Larousse*).

²The *tournois* is a currency minted in Tours, France, up to the 13th Century, followed by a French currency minted after the same model (*Larousse*).

³The *ducat* is a gold coin first minted in Venice in the 13th Century (*Larousse*).