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**Counsels on Holiness of Life**

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# Counsels on Holiness of Life

BEING THE FIRST PART OF

## *THE SINNER'S GUIDE*

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH OF

L U I S D E G R A N A D A

TOGETHER WITH A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

EDITED BY THE

*REV. ORBY SHIPLEY, M.A.*



RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1869

141. k. 296

## Advertisement

THE following Sketch of the Life of Fray Luis de Granada is translated, abridged and rewritten, from the Life of the Author by Mora. A few additions have been made from Muñoz; and one fact has been introduced from Marieta. It is from the pen of one of the Translators.

The text has been translated afresh from the Spanish, and compared with a Latin and Old English version; and having had the benefit of revision at the hands of two competent Spanish scholars, will be found, it is believed, faithfully to represent the original. -

The only omissions that have been made consist

of certain illustrative anecdotes and stories which do not appear essential to the plan or argument of the work, and are more suitable for those for whose benefit the book was written than for the edification of those for whom it is translated.

ORBY SHIPLEY.

ROGATION-TIDE, A.D. 1869.

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# Life

OF

## *L U I S ' D E G R A N A D A .*

### HIS BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

**W**E are ignorant of the day and hour of Fray Luis' birth. It was in the year 1504, and in the city of Granada, taken from the Moors twelve years before by the armies of the Catholic king Fernando and Isabel. His father's name was N. Sarria ; he was a native of the town of that name in Galicia, and was one of the many settlers who came to the city, attracted by the important privileges offered to such colonists. He died when his son was but five years old, leaving his family in such destitution that his widow gained a sustenance as laundress to the convent of Dominicans, recently founded in that capital, and, when this occupation failed her, lived upon the bread which those fathers charitably supplied.

A fortunate accident, or rather one of those events which Divine Providence uses for the furtherance of its high designs, rescued Luis from this state of poverty and destitution. He was playing one day near the Alhambra, with other boys of his own



age, and the game ended in blows. At this moment the Count de Tendilla, governor of that fortress, the same who first waved the Castilian banner over its walls on the day of its conquest, came to a window. He rebuked the small contending parties, on which Luis advanced without the smallest embarrassment, and endeavoured to justify himself with such sound reasons, and in such well-chosen words, that the Count was completely captivated by his ability and manners, and directed inquiry to be made into his family and circumstances. The result was that the Count desired one of his household to see to the maintenance and education of the orphan, and that, gaining the goodwill of his protector more and more, he shortly after entered the service of the magnate's sons as a page, and perhaps also as a school-companion and playfellow. He went down with them every day from the Alhambra to the city, where these youths attended a class of Latin Grammar. Luis carried their books, and received the same lessons as they did.

It is a tradition preserved in Granada, and in the Order of S. Dominic, that Luis displayed an extraordinary precocity in his studies; that from a very early age he manifested great oratorical talents, delighting in gathering other children round him, and preaching to them, and that, discovering an inclination for the Ecclesiastical order, but being unable to aspire higher in a career which then afforded a greater prospect of distinction than any other, he was initiated into it as an Acolyte in the Chapel Royal of the city. His regular daily attendance at Divine Offices in the exercise of this lowly ministry strengthened his religious sentiments, and, filled with ardent longings after perfection, he decided upon separating himself from the world, and dedicating himself to the monastic life in the great family of the Preachers.

In 1524, having completed his nineteenth year, he took the habit of a novice in the Dominican convent of Santa Cruz, which had been established by the victorious sovereigns in one of the most beautiful buildings constructed by the Arabs in the last and dearest of their possessions. One year after, on the 15th of June 1525, after a diligent and edifying noviciate, he made his profession in the same convent, and abandoned the

surname of his family, replacing it by that of the city of his birth.

But neither the obligations of his new position, nor his fervent consecration to study and devotion, ever sufficed to extinguish in his heart the feelings of nature, and the obligations that it imposed. His was not that self-concentrated piety which is so very like worldly selfishness. Having nothing else at his disposal, he daily shared with his mother the ration allotted to him in the refectory, having first obtained leave from the Superior. His love for her never declined ; he frequently visited her, and showed her the most respectful attention. Preaching one day to an immense audience, when all Granada ran after him, he saw the venerable old lady come in, alone and humbly clad, and observing that no one made room for her, he interrupted his discourse to ask his hearers to let his mother pass.

The rank of a chorister, to which the monks attained immediately after their noviciate, demanded much zeal, great vigour of spirit, and no trifling amount of physical power. The Canonical Hours, which were recited in community at midnight, at day-break, and at nightfall, occupied a considerable portion of the day. The remainder was claimed by attendance at lectures, and the study that was necessary in preparation for them. Every convent of S. Dominic was a sort of University. There were complete courses of the humanities, of philosophy, of divinity, dogmatic, scholastic, and moral, and of other studies which serve to complete these, such as exposition of the Bible, reading of the holy Fathers, and practical exercises in sacred oratory. In all these exercises Fray Luis distinguished himself greatly, in all he surpassed his companions, in all he gained the notice and approval of his superiors. It was not long before they had an opportunity of recompensing his exertions, and publicly declaring his superior merit.

#### SAN GREGORIO AT VALLADOLID.

The greater colleges were at that time distinguished and privileged corporations, into which none were admitted but those

whose talents, industry, and merit gave hopes of their becoming afterwards teachers in the universities. One of the most distinguished of these colleges was that of S. Gregory at Valladolid, attached to the Order of S. Dominic, and founded by one of her most illustrious sons, Don Fray Alonso de Burgos, Bishop of Cuenca, Cordoba, and Valencia, and endowed by him with ample revenues and magnificent buildings. Every convent of the province had the right of presenting one or two students. One of the prebends or fellowships of this College in the gift of the royal Convent of Santa Cruz at Granada becoming vacant, Fray Luis was unanimously elected by the fathers of the convent to that honourable distinction, a prize which it would have been impossible for a young man born in poverty to obtain from an assembly of learned and impartial judges, if he had not possessed very eminent gifts of intellect, as well as great purity of morals, and stainless lineage.

Fray Luis' admission to the College of Valladolid, which took place on 11th June 1529, opened before him a new prospect of advancement and perfection. Not content with the cultivation of literature in all its branches, whose flowers we see in his works, with the theological studies which the college rules prescribed, and with application to pulpit oratory, to which especially he resolved to dedicate himself, he plunged into the profoundest depths of mystical theology, to which the natural tenderness of his heart, and his highly poetical imagination led him. Its effects may be traced in many of his writings. Among nearly three hundred mystic and ascetic writers who are the boast of Spain, not one is to be found who excels Fray Luis de Granada in beauty of style, variety of images, or soberness and judiciousness of sentiments, the two last of which are qualities too rarely found among those who cultivate this sublime department of theology.

To this epoch of his life is referred an anecdote which none of his biographers have omitted.

He was in the habit of shutting himself up in his cell after the community had retired, and spending long hours of the night in contemplation and penance. One night, at about eleven o'clock, he was disciplining himself severely in a lonely cell,

which he had chosen for the purpose of being unnoticed, and calling upon GOD with groans, when two young men of good family passed by on some sinful errand. Their attention was attracted by the sounds which the stillness of the night made audible. They stood in amazement at the thought that one who had perhaps never committed a deadly sin in his life should be so rigorously chastising himself at the very moment when they were proposing to sin so grievously against GOD. They returned home. Next morning they came and inquired who inhabited the furthest cell. It was Fray Luis de Granada, first in the college in learning, and first in virtue. They asked for an interview, threw themselves at his feet, and strove to kiss them. The humble friar drew back; they told him what had happened, and besought him to commend them to GOD. Fray Luis was grieved that his penance had been discovered, and sought afterwards more diligently to hide it.

#### RETURN TO GRANADA—PREACHES.

The course of study pursued at the College at Valladolid continued for a fixed time, after which the students returned to their respective convents, and, as a general rule, dedicated themselves to tuition.

Fray Luis returned to Granada, and there, and in other houses of his Order in the province of Andalusia, was successively professor in various departments of philosophy and theology, in which he distinguished himself so highly that in a short time he received the degree of Master in Divinity, which was conferred on him by the Master General of the Order, Fray Vicente Giustiniani, afterwards a Cardinal, and which was confirmed by the Chapter General of the Order, held at Boulogne in 1564.

Not finding, however, in this occupation sufficient scope for the fervent zeal which devoured him, nor sufficient employment for his activity and diligence, he determined to devote himself to the work of preaching, and carefully prepared himself for it.

The circle of his studies was extensive. He compared himself to the silkworm, which does not begin to produce silk till it has

enlarged its body by feeding abundantly for many days, and has come to its full growth and size. He studied chiefly in the Holy Scriptures, especially the prophetic books, the Book of Wisdom, and the prophecies of Jeremiah, so full of indignation against the depravity of mankind. He also studied the Fathers of the Church, and of them he chose S. Chrysostom for his master, on account of his extreme eloquence. From all these books he made large extracts, arranged in order under various heads.

The first scene of his triumphs in this branch of his career was the city of Granada, where he continued several years, not only drawing immense crowds who thronged to hear him, but carrying the light of conviction into many rebellious hearts, and powerfully contributing to a reformation of morals, which were grievously corrupt at that time, owing to the evil roots which Mahometanism had planted, and to the licentious disorders that always follow in the train of war and conquest.

But it was not eloquence and learning alone that gave Fray Luis his great influence. It was his pure and holy example, his zeal for souls, and his perfect devotion to GOD'S service. He inculcated purity by being himself pure; humility, by being humble; contempt of the world, by refusing honours and dignities; poverty, by being himself poor.

He was employed more than forty years in preaching, occupying the most noted pulpits in Spain, and only relinquished it when compelled by age and infirmity.

He was no less attentive to the work of hearing confessions, and was a most successful physician of sick souls. He was ever pleased to hear the lowly; nor was the number of rich and great who flocked to him less great.

Fray Luis had resided in Granada but a few years when he was called upon to undertake an arduous work, which shows the confidence that his superiors reposed in him.

## RESTORES THE MONASTERY OF SCALA COELI.

The General of the Order of S. Dominic, in visiting its convents in Spain, found that of Scala Coeli, situated in the mountains of Cordoba, in utter ruin. He appointed Fray Luis prior of that house, a nomination equivalent to the charge of founding it anew, for nothing remained of the building but the walls, nor had it any inhabitants but the cattle which found a shelter there.

Great and pious memories were attached to this foundation. Fearful accounts were spread of portents observed there, ringing of bells was heard, lights seen upon the altars, ghostly chantings echoed at the hour of matins, appearances of monks in prayer or study were seen through the dismantled windows, and the shepherds declared that they had seen a monk of gigantic stature rise from the founder's tomb, and, with a rod, drive their flocks out of the deserted church.

These circumstances, together with the rugged and mountainous nature of the site, and the deep and gloomy solitude which reigns around, concurred to enhance the lively interest with which the entire Order regarded this tarnished jewel of their crown, and to increase their desire of seeing it restored to its ancient splendour.

Besides this, the history of its foundation afforded a subject of interest, so accordant with the prevailing opinions of that epoch, that we cannot refrain from inserting it here, though with the utmost brevity possible.

Fray Alvaro de Cordoba, a friar of the Order of Preachers, having gained great renown by his apostolic labours in Spain, Italy, and Jerusalem, received the honour of being summoned to the court of John II. of Castile, and being named that monarch's confessor. But his love for contemplation and contempt for worldly things constrained him to forsake the court, and to seek in a more congenial scene an ampler scope for the earnest longings of his soul. He conceived he had discovered

what he sought in a wild and rugged solitude, situated about a league from Cordoba, in the lofty sierra which partly surrounds the city, where the utter loneliness, the ruggedness of the soil, and the forbidding aspect of the whole region, secured him perfectly against the distractions of human society. This locality possessed in his eyes the further recommendation of resembling in its topographical distribution the city of the Prophet. He gave to the spots in which the resemblance was principally marked the names of Calvary, Kedron, and the Mount of Olives.

A deep cavern, naturally formed in the rock, was his first habitation, but, after a short time, others gathered round him, attracted by the fame of his virtues, and animated with the same spirit of abnegation and asceticism ; and in their company, with the help of the plentiful alms of the pious, Fray Alvaro founded a monastery, in which not only was the rule of the Order scrupulously observed, but the severest penances were practised, and the community was unceasingly engaged in striving after the perfection of the spiritual life.

The death of the founder occasioned no relaxation in the zeal of his companions. For the space of a century did this nursery of pious men flourish. The causes of its sudden decay are unknown to us ; but this decay was so complete that when Fray Luis took possession of his priorate he found nothing but ruins.

His ardour was in no degree cooled by the dreary prospect, nor was he dismayed by the many obstacles that opposed themselves to the success of his mission. By a judicious choice of companions, anxious like himself to exert themselves for the honour of the Order, and with the alms furnished by the liberality of the charitable, he succeeded in restoring the house of Scala Cœli to its primitive splendour, extending its reputation throughout the country, and propagating in these almost inaccessible regions sound doctrine recommended by perfect examples.

The duties of this arduous ministry did not, however, furnish sufficient food for his indefatigable activity. He often descended from the monastery into the city of Cordoba, and the

neighbouring villages, to teach and preach the Word of GOD ; and thus he became known to many of the chief persons in Andalusia, who sought his acquaintance, put themselves under his direction, and contracted intimate friendships with him. Amongst these were the Marques de Priego, the Conde de Feria, Fray Lorenzo de Figueroa, Bishop of Siguenza, the Jesuit Father Antonio de Cordoba, the Marquesa Dona Catalina, proprietress of the estate, and, above all, the celebrated Maestro Juan de Avila.

It has been handed down by tradition in Andalusia, and is generally credited, that the Count de Feria once asked Avila, in Fray Luis' presence, what he thought of a sermon that the latter had just preached. The Father, on being much pressed, replied that no sermon in which CHRIST crucified and S. Paul were not preached, and his doctrine inculcated, gave him much content. These words made a lively impression on the heart of Fray Luis, and gave rise to various discussions between the two on the way of becoming a judicious writer, a good preacher, and a spiritual man. From this day he chose Avila as his master, consulted him in all his doubts, and followed his advice both as to his books and other matters.

It is likewise asserted that Avila counselled him to "stint himself." On Fray Luis replying that he did not understand him, Avila said, "Do as the Counts did with the Azorians ; they deprived them of food, that hunger might compel them to the chase. Hunger, thirst, long greatly for the conversion of souls, and you will experience great effects, and gather plenteous fruits."

The truth of this is confirmed by a circumstance related in the life of Avila, on the authority of many who were present, that after preaching one day at Santa Clara de Montilla, Fray Luis said to Avila in the sacristy, "I owe more to you, and to your counsels, than to many years of study, and therefore I acknowledge you to be my master." The saintly Juan de Avila answered with great humility, "The true Master is GOD, unto Whom alone all honour and glory is due."

It was while he lived at Scala Coeli that he wrote his book on Meditations and Prayers, and other works. He used to go

*b*



to a torrent near the convent, where he sat among the broken rocks, and dictated to two amanuenses. The torrent is called to this day "Fray Luis de Granada's brook."

Fray Luis had continued about eight years at Scala Cœli, when he was called to a different occupation, the house being now thoroughly restored, and the community in good order. He was about forty-eight years of age, having left the College of S. Gregorio probably in June 1534, after staying only five years instead of the full term of eight. In Granada, according to the tradition of the Convent of Santa Cruz, he lived ten years, and at Scala Cœli about eight.

PREACHES BEFORE THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER. MADE COURT  
PREACHER TO THE DUKE OF MEDINA SIDONIA.

Fray Luis was summoned, as prior, to attend a Provincial Chapter of the Order, which was of more than ordinary importance, both on account of the grave matters that were to be laid before it, and of the attendance of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, a nobleman highly esteemed by the Dominicans, not only as a generous patron of their Order, but also as head of the house of Guzman, the family of their founder S. Dominic. The best preachers were selected to deliver the sermons on these occasions. Fray Luis was one of the number, and the Duke was so struck by his sermon that he asked leave of the Provincial to take him with him to exercise his ministry in his palace of San Lucar. It was impossible to refuse his request, and Fray Luis, in obedience to the precept of his Superior, left his conventual and retired life. This interruption lasted but a short time. The Duke's household liked the graces of rhetoric better than the simple Word of GOD. They were willing to praise or criticise the sermon. Much applause could be obtained, but no fruit in souls, as it is said in Ezekiel, "Thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument : for they hear Thy words, but they do

them not." The friar grew extremely disgusted with his new employment, and anxiously desired to bring it to an end. A favourable opportunity speedily presented itself.

#### FOUNDATION OF A MONASTERY AT BADAJOZ.

A design had been entertained for some time of founding a convent at Badajoz, and the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and other benefactors of the Order, took the warmest interest in it as well as the Fathers themselves. Fray Luis volunteered his services for this work, which required an abundant supply of alms, and a voice capable of obtaining them.

His Superiors approving, he crossed over into Estremadura, and began his task, in which he was so successful that in a short time the building was completed, and a community assembled, composed of members selected by Fray Luis himself from the houses of his own province. Here he composed his celebrated "Sinner's Guide," a work which made him famous throughout all Europe.\*

\* The Cardinal Enrique was the son of Emmanuel the Great of Portugal, and of Maria, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabel. He was brother to Joaõ III., who married Catalina, sister of Charles V., Emperor of Germany, and had but one son married to his cousin, the daughter of Charles V. and of Isabel of Portugal. This son died young, leaving no child but the ill-fated Sebastian. On the death of Joaõ, the only lives that remained between Philip II. of Spain and the Portuguese crown were those of the young child Sebastian and the elderly priest Enrique. Sebastian's mother had returned to Spain. Catalina was appointed Regent, which office she held till shortly before her death, when she resigned it to the Cardinal Enrique. Sebastian's history is too well known to need repeating. After his death, or, as the Portuguese persisted in calling it, his mysterious disappearance, Enrique was prevailed upon to solicit a dispensation from his vow of celibacy in order to save Portugal from the alternative of Philip II. or war. It was in vain, he died childless, and Philip became master of Portugal, to which he sent his sister Juana as Regent. When the dominion of Spain became unendurable, the whole of Portugal rose against it, and a new dynasty ascended the throne. These political affairs had something to do with the troubles of Luis de Granada's later years, for many of the revelations of the nun, Maria de la Visitacion, were political, and were dictated or made use of by favourers of the house of Braganza.

GOES INTO PORTUGAL AT THE INVITATION OF THE  
CARDINAL INFANTE.

Castile being now filled with his name, he passed over into the neighbouring kingdom, where the Cardinal Infante, Dom Enrique, son of the King Dom Manuel, and grandson by his mother of Fernando and Isabel, occupied the archiepiscopal see of Evora, having before filled that of Braga.

The Cardinal desired to have Fray Luis, and at his request the Provincial sent him to Evora, where he was most affectionately received by the Infante ; and where, a few days after his arrival, he began to exercise his favourite ministry of preaching, which was attended with the same success here as elsewhere.

So great was Fray Luis' popularity among the Portuguese, and so firm and affectionate was the Cardinal's attachment to him, that the latter, unable to bear the thought of parting with him, requested and obtained Fray Luis' promotion to the Dominican provincialate of Portugal, by which a new and brilliant career was opened to him. It was in 1557 that the office became vacant. He was unanimously elected at a meeting in the celebrated monastery of Batalha. He refused the dignity many times, and only yielded at last to the persevering entreaties of his friend Dom Enrique.

In the discharge of his new functions he occupied himself as he had done in every office and charge that he had hitherto filled, not limiting himself to the strict fulfilment of his duties, but always aspiring to something beyond what their letter required.

He never intermitted his studies during the time that his office of Provincial lasted, he carried his books with him on his visitation journeys, and had a sort of desk or bookstand fitted to his saddle, so that he might be able to read as he travelled.

Under his rule the province made great acquisitions. Among them were—1. The conversion of the vicariate of Santa Maria de la Luz at Pedroagon into a vast and well-built convent. 2.

The foundation of the convent of San Antonio at Montemayor el Nuevo, a rich and flourishing town of Alemtejo. 3. The annexation of the wealthy monastery of Ansede, in the diocese of Oporto, with its scanty community and large revenues to the large and poor convents of S. Dominic at Lisbon, an affair of considerable importance to the Order, in which he would probably have been unsuccessful but for the firm protection of the Queen Doña Catalina. 4. After he had ceased to be Provincial, he promoted the foundation of the convent of S. Sebastian at Setubal. It was founded by King Dom Sebastian.

#### REFUSES THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF BRAGA.

That virtuous and religious princess, Queen Catalina, not only made choice of Fray Luis for her confessor, and consulted him on the most important affairs of the state, but on the death of Dom Fray Baltasar de Lempe, Archbishop of Braga, she resolved to confer the vacant mitre upon him. Even before this intention had been publicly declared, a rumour had spread abroad, and it had been received with approval by the public in general, but with regret by Fray Luis' more intimate friends, who, knowing the exceeding gentleness of his character, and the kindness of his heart, dreaded the many disappointments and vexations to which he would be subjected in a city notorious for the depravity of its inhabitants. His especial and most worthy friend, Fray Bartolomé de los Martires, Prior of Benfica, wrote to beg him most earnestly not to accept so perilous and anxious a charge.

Fray Luis was then at Santarem, recovering from the effects of a dangerous fall. The Prior sent him congratulations about his health, but none about his mitre. He earnestly recommended him to pray to GOD that, as He had been pleased to save his foot in the fall, so He would now rescue him from the "Braga" (which in Portuguese means fetters) with which the world threatened him, which he held to be a worse kind of fall.

The Queen was incessantly solicited by members of her family

and court with requests in favour of other candidates, so much so that she expressed a wish that all the prelates in Spain might be immortal, at least during her rule, that she might not again be exposed to such a contest. But she determined to follow the impulses of her own conscience, and sent for Fray Luis to Lisbon.

On his arrival she first reminded him that she had before vainly offered him the bishopric of Viseu, and then intimated to him her present desire in the most peremptory terms; saying that demoralisation and impiety had made such alarming progress in Braga, that a man of courage and reputation such as his was absolutely needed to check such extreme disorder; that, after long consideration, she had not been able to find any one more capable of undertaking that difficult task, and that she had begun to despair of the salvation of those misguided souls, unless by his example and exhortations he would hasten to their succour. To these arguments the Queen added the claims of her friendship, showing plainly, by her voice and looks, how great would be her satisfaction at seeing this elevated post occupied by a man who had so entirely merited her confidence, and from whose intercourse she had gained so much benefit for her own soul.

Fray Luis heard this discourse with profound humility and silent respect, and when the Queen had ended, skilfully preparing her mind by an exordium full of gentleness and gratitude, he represented to her the exceeding magnitude of the undertaking, and concluded by refusing, with a bold and holy firmness, to accept a distinction as much at variance with his personal temper as with the modest, retired, and laborious habits of his life.

The Queen knew the veracity and rectitude of her confessor too well to persist in the fruitless design of subduing him to her wishes. Suppressing, therefore, the deep regret that this refusal occasioned her, she changed her plan, and placed the choice of the new Archbishop in Fray Luis' hands.

He accepted this commission with pleasure, and requested to be allowed time to meditate upon its execution. The Queen gave him three days, at the end of which he again presented

himself at the palace, and designated Fray Bartolomé de los Martires as a person eminently fitted for so eminent and delicate an office. The Queen approved of the nomination, and Fray Bartolomé was summoned to her presence. It is impossible, says one of his biographers, to describe the consternation of his soul on hearing from the mouth of the princess the resolution which had been made in his favour. The same reasons with which he had forewarned Fray Luis of the perils with which this high dignity was surrounded now presented themselves to his mind ; and as soon as he had somewhat recovered from his surprise, he laid before the Queen the motives which prompted him on this occasion to refuse obedience to her commands. The Queen, apprehensive of the new perplexities which would ensue, should she again be forced to seek for a fitting individual, not one of the many who were anxiously soliciting the appointment, had a long conversation with Fray Bartolomé, but gained nothing from it but vexation and discouragement, seeing her good intentions now for the second time frustrated, and the hope she had entertained of making a nomination to which no objection could be made so completely baffled.

Fray Bartolomé likewise departed from this interview, disturbed and disquieted. He shut himself up in his cell, and resolved, at the risk of being held discourteous, to avoid every occasion of returning to the Court, and exposing himself to fresh annoyances.

The Queen had formed so high an opinion of Fray Bartolomé, that she would not desist from her intention. She sent for Fray Luis de Granada, and desired him to employ all possible means to induce his friend to accede to her wishes, exercising his authority as Superior, if he found persuasions and entreaties insufficient.

Fray Luis determined to obey this mandate, being convinced of its justice and propriety, on account of the special qualities which fitted the Prior of Benfica in his judgment for the office which she intended to confer on him. He went accordingly to visit him, and they had a long and animated conversation and argument on the subject. At length finding all other means unavailing, on Monday, 8th August 1558, he commanded the

bell to be rung for the assembling of a Chapter, and when the whole community had assembled, he ordered Fray Bartolomé to stand up, and, after addressing to him a discourse full of sound doctrine and affectionate feeling, he solemnly imposed upon him the obligation of accepting the Archbishopric of Braga, to which he had been presented by the Queen, under the penalty of excommunication. Fray Bartolomé having now no resource left, exhibiting the most unequivocal signs of grief and dejection, protested that he obeyed solely to avoid breaking his vow, and disobeying the precept of his Superior, and promised to make no alteration in his rule of life, and to spend none of the revenues of his See except in accordance with the canons, and with the examples and counsels of the Saints. To this Fray Luis replied by giving the Archbishop-designate some salutary admonitions as to the conduct proper to be observed in his new dignity, which Fray Bartolomé immediately reduced to writing on a paper that served as a mark in the breviary which he commonly used.

Queen Catalina resigned the government which she had exercised for some years as Regent for her grandson, Dom Sebastian, and imitating the example of her brother, Charles V., not willing that death should surprise her while involved in affairs of state, she retired from public life, and became wholly absorbed in preparation for another world.

The Infante Enrique assumed the government. Fray Luis followed his steps, and those of the Queen, whose spiritual director he had now become, and who therefore needed a more constant communication with her confessor. His office as Provincial Master had come to an end shortly before, in October 1572, and he came to Lisbon, and became an inhabitant of the Convent of S. Dominic, where he passed the last years of his life, observing all the duties of a Christian and religious life with the most scrupulous exactness, and striving to advance more and more in the way of perfection, and in union with his Creator.

**WAY OF LIFE IN LISBON.**

Fray Luis preached constantly before the Court, and was keeper of the royal conscience, which charge never led him to neglect the exercises of composing, preaching, and receiving confessions. He was accustomed to rise every night for matins, till his great age excused him, and did not lie down again, but occupied himself throughout the deep silence of the night in converse with GOD, at one time in prayer, at another in meditation on the Divine mysteries, until the sun appeared. The remainder of the day he spent in studying, in hearing confessions, in giving ghostly counsel, in Sacred offices in the choir, in visiting the sick, in other works to procure the salvation of souls, and the glory of GOD. It is a great thing to be said of him that he was never seen idle.

He may be said to have passed his whole life in prayer, for it was in prayer that he meditated and prepared what he afterwards wrote.

In his latter years, he ordinarily rose at four in the morning ; until six, he applied himself to mental prayer and preparation for saying Mass. He never missed a single day in his attendance at the holy Altar, for it was an opinion he expressed that the best preparation for celebrating was a daily celebration, and he strongly reprobated those who, out of excessive fear and reverence, deprive themselves of this great good. The sacrifice was followed by prayer and thanksgiving at some length. He continued in these holy occupations till eight. Going then to his cell, he ordinarily called some one to write for him. He had recited his hours before Mass. He would then continue his studies, the chief was writing.

The manner of proceeding was this : First, he would desire some book to be read to him, for his failing sight needed such help ; the reading lasted an hour. Then he would begin to dictate, generally walking up and down, and dictating as fluently as if he were reading out of a book. The dictation lasted till ten. He then dismissed the amanuensis, and taking the pen himself, wrote till eleven on some other subject. At meal-time



he went down into the refectory, and partook of what was provided, never forgetting the ancient custom of setting aside a large portion for the poor. If illness, or some necessary occupation hindered him from dining with the rest, he had some one, while he ate, to read him some portion of what he had dictated in the morning, and directed corrections to be made. On rising from the table, he was in the habit of going to visit the sick in the infirmary, not merely to ask after their health, but to inquire if they were in want of anything, especially when there were strangers there, and he used secretly to instruct the infirmarians to find out the truth, and would bountifully provide for their wants out of the means at his disposal.

Leaving the infirmary, he used to join the fathers assembled for recreation, when talking was permitted, and would converse with them in a lively and cheerful manner for some half-an-hour, and at times only a quarter. Returning to his cell, he would lie down for half-an-hour, or for a very short space.

If nones were sung, he attended, and would stay a long time. At seasons when there were no nones, he would call for the writer at about one o'clock, and spend the time till compline, or night, in dictating.

After compline, from which he was never absent, he would continue in prayer for hours together before the Blessed Sacrament, concluding his devotions with a long and severe discipline. After this, he used to recite matins with his cell-companion.

His supper, when the fasts of the Order did not prohibit it, was usually two eggs, which either he or his companion cooked over the flame of a lamp, with a few crumbs of bread, and a little wine much diluted with water. This he took at eleven at night.

He was a constant tenant of his cell, never leaving the House but on occasions of great importance. He went to the palace when sent for. Visitors at the house were few, none complimentary. Any who came to him for comfort or help he received kindly, listened to them, and counselled them, and then would courteously dismiss them, and take up again the thread of his pious exercises.

## RETIREMENTS.

Fray Luis was a passionate lover of solitude. We have already mentioned that at *Scala Cœli* he spent much time, and composed many of his works by the side of a mountain torrent. In Portugal he found a place exactly suited to his wishes. The town of *Pedroagon el Grande* crowns a bold and lofty sierra ; the monastery of our Lady of Light stands on a declivity covered with wild rocks and trees, down which the river *Zezeze* rushes. It is full of sheer descents and precipices, to look from which might make the boldest heart shrink. At the foot of the rock on which the monastery stands, the impetuous *Zezeze* meets with the smaller *Pera*, as it dashes along over rocks and stones. They cause an appalling sound, which is heard at an immense distance, the dull roar of the larger river mingling with the thinner and sharper sound of the other. They are hemmed in by lofty sierras, some peaks shooting upwards till their summits are lost in the clouds, others of less elevation clothed with dense and savage thickets, the haunt of boars, wolves, and other ferocious animals which prowl up to the very gates of the city in search of prey. The whole scene is one of utter desolation and loneliness. The first time that Father Luis came to this house, he was wonderfully pleased with it. During the days that he was there, he spent much time among the rocks beneath the convent in prayer and meditation. Such was the delight he had there, that he ever spoke of *Pedroagon* with deep affection and longing, and when his occupations at Lisbon permitted it, he would return to those deep solitudes to spend days in prayer and contemplation. It was here that he composed many of his works, choosing for his *Patmos* a spot at the extremity of the precincts, at the foot of a very high rock which overhangs the place where the rivers *Zezeze* and *Pera* meet. The rock is called to this day *Granada's Rock*.

## IMPOSTURE OF THE PRIORESS.

Fray Luis de Granada had attained to an extreme old age,

when his reputation which had spread throughout Christendom suffered for a time great though unjust detriment, in consequence of an occurrence which made a great noise in the world. Maria de la Visitacion, Prioress of the convent of the Anunciada at Lisbon, had become the object of public admiration, not only in Portugal and Spain, but in other countries, and in Rome itself. It was related that GOD had conferred on her most astonishing and especial favours as rewards for her supposed virtues ; that her revelations were frequent and startling ; that she had on her body the marks of the five wounds of the SAVIOUR, open and bleeding ; that she was often surrounded by supernatural light, and at other times was lifted up from the ground, and remained suspended in the air. People of the highest rank, divines and friars, gave credit to these portents. From persons of the blood royal, and others of the highest rank, she constantly received magnificent gifts of gold, silver, and jewels ; and many learned and pious men sought to place themselves under her direction, and consulted her in their doubts, scruples, and temptations. Without going to these extremes, Fray Luis fell, like so many others, into the snare ; and not only did he, in perfect good faith, give credit to all that was reported of this woman, but he even censured those who ridiculed her, and disbelieved her communications with the DEITY, and thought the marks that she exhibited an imposture.

But on the 9th of August 1588 the Cardinal Albert, Governor and Inquisitor-General of the kingdom, having conceived some suspicions of the nun's veracity, appointed a commission to inquire into the reality of these marvels. It consisted of two Bishops, two councillors, a Jesuit, and a Dominican Prelate. In her first statement the impostor detailed, at great length, a series of prodigies which GOD had been pleased to work in her, and of singular and supernatural favours which He had bestowed on her, some of them so unworthy of the Majesty of the Supreme Being, and so incompatible with His Wisdom, that the narration alone was enough to convict her of profaneness, hypocrisy, and falsehood. Not contenting themselves with this, however, the commissioners proceeded to a personal inspection

of her wounds, making different experiments on them to test their reality. These trials showed that they were feigned, and it was then discovered that the infatuated woman did not possess even the cunning that was needful to sustain her part, and to give her fables some degree of verisimilitude. Finding herself detected, she publicly confessed her misconduct, declared her shame and penitence, and was condemned to a severe penance.

Although such deceptions of false devotion were by no means uncommon in that age, and are unhappily but too often repeated in our own days, the incident of the Portuguese nun was the occasion of terrible scandal in the Church. Many grave and learned men wrote on the subject, and some of them declared that fanaticism, superstition, and erroneous belief were the predominating vices of the day, and the chief cause of the deep degradation and ignorance in which the people were sunk.

The bitter news of these discoveries was received by Fray Luis with more grief for the nun's guilt than sorrow for the injury inflicted on his own reputation. Instead of persisting in his error, or suffering his mind to be depressed by an event which might tend to lower him in the public estimation, he returned thanks to GOD for having permitted the discovery of the truth, and preserved the Church from being dishonoured by the triumph of falsehood. He composed a sermon on the subject, taking for his text the words of S. Paul, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" In this he points out the benefit that the good may derive from such enormous scandals. He warns Christians to fear and distrust their own selves as long as they live, however far advanced they may consider themselves in the practice of virtue, when they see how easily those fall who live a life committed to GOD, and out of the reach of temptation. He speaks of the sin of scandal, and of blaming those who are living in retirement and meditation, because of the fall of one. He severely admonishes the weak and faint-hearted, who, seeing one whom they believed in fall, give way to discouragement, and leave their own religious practices, and he concludes with some counsels on the use of the Sacraments. He made haste to publish this; it was his last work. Already he felt the first symptoms of his mortal disease.

## LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

Luis de Granada had already suffered from two severe illnesses. In the first he had entirely lost his sight. He was always short-sighted. After a night of hard work, poring over papers, and preparing a sermon for the next day, he discovered in the morning that the sight of one eye was entirely gone. He preached his sermon with the utmost tranquillity and calmness. When both eyes appeared to have failed, he applied himself to the study of music, that he might play the organ at Divine Service. In a few months the sight of one eye returned. From that time he always wrote on coloured paper.

The second illness was the relaxation of a small rupture. This occurred in 1586, and occasioned him great distress, not so much on account of the intense pain, as of the necessary exposure before the doctors who vainly attempted to reduce it, which was repulsive to his feelings of modesty.

It was in the year 1588, when he had completed the eighty-fourth year of his age, that, after a very rigid abstinence during Advent, his digestion became disordered to such an extent as to produce a slow fever, with severe pain and vomitings. The physicians attempted to cure him by stimulants, which only aggravated the symptoms. When he perceived that his disease would soon bring him to his eternal rest, he rejoiced exceedingly, his face was full of peace and tranquillity, and had the appearance of perfect health. His only anxiety was to enter soon into the presence of GOD. He never complained of any thing, even when things were brought him at wrong times, and badly prepared, as will happen in communities.

On the 30th of December the physicians found him very weak, and desired that he should receive the Viaticum. When the announcement was made to him, he showed no emotion or regret. Well might he say in his heart, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the LORD. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be always praising Thee." He made his confession before his departure,

though he had confessed many times in the course of his illness, for they who are filled with heavenly light see the smallest motes, and the slightest negligences, and always seek to cleanse and purify their consciences.

The next day, being the last day in the year, at four o'clock in the afternoon, he received Extreme Unction, being in full possession of all his senses, and joining in the Psalms and prayers with the utmost tranquillity and composure. After this, at the request of some of the brethren, he gave a devout address to the novices, exhorting them to perseverance and the love of GOD. He then begged to be left alone, and continued for more than an hour in prayer to GOD, his fervent words of rejoicing being heard outside of the cell.

He desired the Passion of our LORD, in S. John's Gospel, to be read to him, and then took leave of his friends. Feeling life departing from his lower extremities, he asked for the holy taper, which was given to him, his breath grew fainter and fainter, and without change or movement of the body, his soul departed to the eternal mansions.

"Farewell, O happy soul, depart unto thy GOD, flee to those blissful regions where my weak vision cannot follow thee ; taste of that fruition which thy learned toils have earned thee ; enter in to abide in the temple of the Living GOD, where thou shalt reside for ever. Let not my weak style presume to enhance thy praises ; for, unless with language equal to thy own, they will be injured, tarnished, and bedimmed."

These are the words of his biographer Muñoz.

His death took place at nine o'clock at night, on the last day of the year 1588. He was eighty-four years of age, and had been sixty-six a friar.

It remains that we speak of his personal appearance and character. In stature he was above the middle height, and dignified, large of bone and of proportionable stoutness. His face expressed angelic cheerfulness, his skin was soft and delicate, his colour bright, his eyes somewhat deepset, but cheerful and modest, generally fixed on the ground ; his forehead spacious and serene, the lines near the root of the nose meeting so as to form a star, his teeth white and regular, the

nose aquiline, the mouth of moderate size, the hair at one time somewhat fair, afterwards white, his head large and rather bald. He was most pleasant in conversation, and friendly with all, but too intimate with none. His whole aspect so reverend that it inspired respect. He was said to excel in three things—in preaching, in writing, and in speaking.

Of his diligence, his patience, and his humility, it is unnecessary to speak. His life shows them, and shows their source, fervent love to GOD, and love to men. He was not without enemies. Misrepresentations were made of him to Philip II. at the time of his going into Portugal, and his Book on Prayer, and the Guide of Sinners, were put in the index of forbidden books, where they were in good company with the works of Avila, Carranza, Villegas, Luis de Leon, and others of those whose names are now most highly venerated in Spain.

# COUNSELS ON HOLINESS OF LIFE

## Argument

**T**HIS Book, Christian Reader, contains an exhortation to Virtue—that is, to obedience, and keeping the Commandments of GOD, wherein true Virtue consists. It is divided into three chief parts. The First persuades men to virtue, and brings forward the reasons that the saints ordinarily allege; first, our great obligation to GOD our LORD, both for what He is in Himself, and for what He is to us by reason of His unspeakable Benefits; secondly, the importance of virtue to us, proved by the four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell—of which accordingly we discourse.

The Second part has the same object, but brings forward other new reasons, the good things and years promised in this life to virtue. Twelve of these especial privileges are named, and severally treated of. The Saints have sometimes touched shortly on these privileges, declaring the peace, the light, the true liberty and joy of a good conscience, and the comforts of the HOLY GHOST, which are enjoyed by the righteous, and which ordinarily accompany virtue; but I know no writer who treats of this matter at length and in order. And this has made the work more laborious, as I had to collect and gather all these things out of Holy Scripture, to give them names, to arrange and explain them, and produce proofs of each from the said Scripture, and from the words of the Saints. And this diligence

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was needful, that those who are not moved to the love of virtue by the hope of good things to come, because they appear so far off, may be moved by the inestimable value of those that accompany it here.

But seeing that all reasons that can be adduced on one side are insufficient unless we can answer the arguments of the other party, the Third part of this Book is devoted to answering all the excuses that vicious men are wont to make for their neglect of virtue.

And because the subject of this Book is Virtue, let the Reader understand that, by this word, is meant not only the habit of virtue, but all the arts that proceed therefrom ; for it is a common figure of speech to take the effect for the cause, and the cause for the effect.

## CHAPTER I.

*Of the Legal Title that God has on Man, binding him to His Service and to Virtue. First Title: That He is What He is. Herein is the Excellence of God's Perfections set forth.*

**T**WO things especially, Christian Reader, move the wills of men to any good work. One is their obligation to it, as matter of right and justice; the other, the fruit and profit that follow from it. And therefore it is the common sentence of the wise, that these two things, justice and profit, are the two spurs that move our will in all its operations. Now, of these two, profit is ordinarily the most desired; but right and justice are, of themselves, more powerful. For there is no profit in this world so great as to be equal to the excellence of virtue; nor is there any loss so great that a wise man ought not to choose it in preference to falling into a vice, as Aristotle teaches. Wherefore, as it is our purpose in this book to allure and win men to the beauty of virtue, it will be well to begin by this more important side, declaring our obligation to virtue by our obligation to GOD, Who, being Goodness itself, desires, commands, esteems, and requires nothing in this world more than virtue. Let us then study and examine with all diligence the titles whereby He most justly demands this tribute.

But as these titles are innumerable, we will only touch here on six of the chief ones, under each of which, man rightfully owes Him all that he can do, and all that he is, without any exception. The first and greatest, and the most impossible to

explain, is that He is What He is, and this includes all the Greatness of His Majesty and of His other perfections—namely, the incomprehensible immensity of His Goodness, of His Mercy, of His Justice, of His Wisdom, of His Omnipotence, of His Nobleness, of His Beauty, of His Faithfulness, of His Truth, of His Gentleness, of His Felicity, of His Majesty, and of the other infinite Riches and Perfections that are in Him. And these are so many and so great, that, as a Doctor says, if all the world were full of books, and all the creatures in it were writers, and all the water in the sea were ink, the world would be filled with books, and the writers wearied, and the sea dried up, before they had succeeded in explaining one of these perfections, as it is. And this Doctor adds still more, and says, that if GOD created a new man, with a heart as large and capacious as all the hearts in the world, and if this man were to behold one of these perfections by a new and unusual light, there would be great risk that he should altogether faint, or even die, under the great joy and sweetness that would superabound in him, unless GOD gave him especial strength to bear it.

This, then, is the first and chiefest reason whereby we are bound to love, to serve, and to obey the LORD. So true is this, that even the very Epicurean philosophers, the destroyers of all philosophy, who deny Divine Providence and the immortality of the soul, do not deny religion, that is, the worship and veneration of GOD. For one of them disputing, in Tully's Book On the Nature of the Gods, confesses and proves most efficaciously that there is a GOD, and confesses also the exalted sovereignty of His admirable perfections, for which he says that He deserves worship and veneration, because they are due to the excellence of that most glorious Being for His very excellence, if He had no other title. For if we honour and reverence a king even out of his kingdom, where we receive no benefit from him, only because of the royal dignity of his person, how much more reverence is due to Him Who hath, as S. John says, "on His Vesture and on His Thigh a Name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords?" (Rev. xix. 16.) He it is Who "comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure." (Isa. xl. 12.) He orders causes, moves the heavens, changes the seasons, trans-

creates the elements, distributes the waters, produces the winds, originates all things, influences the planets, and, as KING and LORD of all, gives food to all creatures. And, what is more, His Kingdom and His Dominion come not by succession, nor by election, nor by inheritance, but by nature. For, as a man is naturally superior to an ant, so does that Most Glorious Being so far surpass all created things, that the whole of them, and all this great world, are hardly as an ant before Him. Now, if a heathen, the follower of a false philosophy, acknowledged and confessed this truth, what will Christian philosophy teach? It teaches us that, although there are innumerable titles that bind us to GOD'S Service, this is the greatest of all, and that, if there were no other, this would deserve all the love and all the service of man, even if he had infinite hearts and bodies to employ in it. The Saints have always sought to fulfil this, and their love has been so pure and disinterested that S. Bernard says of it, "True and perfect love neither gains strength by confidence, nor loses it by discouragement." He means that it is neither encouraged to serve GOD for what it hopes to receive, nor would it be dismayed if it knew that it should receive nothing, because it is not moved by interest, but by pure love due to that Infinite Goodness.

But although this title be the most obligatory, it least moves the more imperfect: First, because they are moved by their own interest in a degree proportional to the power that self-love has over them; secondly, because they are yet dull and ignorant, and are incapable of understanding the dignity and beauty of that Supreme Goodness. For if they had fuller knowledge of this, its splendour would so carry away their hearts, that they would be contented with this alone, and seek for nothing more. And therefore it will not be out of place to give them here a little light by which they may know somewhat more of the Greatness and Dignity of this LORD. This is taken from that consummate theologian, S. Dionysius, whose chief object in his Mystical Theology, is to give us to understand the difference between the Divine Being and all created beings; and to teach us, if we would know GOD, to turn our eyes away from the perfections of all creatures, lest we should deceive ourselves

by trying to search out and measure GOD by them ; whereas he would have us leave them all here below, and lift up ourselves to contemplate a Being above all being, a Substance above all substance, a Light above all light, before which all light is darkness, and a Beauty above all beauty, compared with which all beauty is deformity. This is signified to us by the cloud into which Moses entered to talk with GOD, (Exod. xxiv. 18,) which hid from him the sight of all that was not GOD, that He might know GOD better. And the same thing is declared to us by Elijah's wrapping his face in his mantle, when he saw the Glory of the LORD pass by. (1 Kings xix. 13.) For a man must shut his eyes to all things here below as low and disproportionately little, when he desires to contemplate the Glory of GOD.

This will be seen more clearly, if we consider the very great difference that there is between that Uncreated Being and all created beings, which is that between the Creator and His creatures, for we see that they all had a beginning, and may have an end ; but He had no beginning and can have no end. They all acknowledge a superior, and depend on another ; He acknowledges no superior and depends on none. They all are variable and subject to change ; in Him is no change or variability. They all are complex in different manners : He is not complex, but is perfect Simplicity ; for had He been composed of parts, there must have been one before Him to join those parts together, which is impossible. They all can be more than they are, and have more than they have, and know more than they know : but He cannot be more than He is ; for in Him is all being, nor can He have more than He possesses, for He is the Abyss of all riches, nor can He know more than He knows, because of the Infinity of His Wisdom and the excellence of His Eternity, to which all things are present. For which cause Aristotle calls Him a pure Act, that is, ultimate and supreme Perfection, which suffers no addition, because it is not possible that It should be more than It is, nor can anything be imagined that It lacks. All creatures fight under the banner of movement, that being poor and needy they may move to seek what they need : but He has no occasion to move, because

nothing is lacking to Him, and because He is present everywhere. In all other things there are different parts, which are distinct from each other, but in Him there can be no distinction of different parts, by reason of His perfect Simplicity. Thus His Being is His Essence, and His Essence is His Power, and His Power is His Good Pleasure, and His Good Pleasure is His Will, and His Will is His Understanding, and His Understanding is His Knowledge, and His Knowledge is His Being, and His Being is His Wisdom, and His Wisdom is His Goodness, and His Goodness is His Justice, and His Justice is His Mercy: for although the effects of these two are as opposite as forgiveness is to punishment, yet in Him they are in truth so entirely one, that His very Justice is His Mercy, and His Mercy is His Justice. And thus, as S. Augustine says, He comprises in Himself Acts and Perfections that appear opposite and marvellous. For He is most Hidden and most Present; most Beautiful and most Strong; Motionless, and beyond comprehension, without locality and in every place; Invisible and Seeing all things; Unchangeable and changing all; ever Working and ever Still; Filling all things, but not circumscribed; Providing all things, yet never distracted; Great without quantity, and therefore Immense; Good without qualification, and therefore truly and supremely Good: nay, there is none good, but He alone. (S. Matt. xix. 17.)

In short, all created things, as they have a limited essence that comprehends them, have also limited power to which they extend, limited works on which they are exercised, limited places wherein they abide, limited names whereby they are signified, particular definitions whereby they are distinguished, and special categories or species wherein they are contained. But that supreme Substance, infinite in Essence, is infinite too in Power, and in all things; and therefore It has no definition to distinguish It, no species to contain It, no place to limit It, and no name to signify It as It truly is. Rather, as S. Dionysius says, Having no name, It has all names, for It contains in Itself all the perfections that are signified by those names. From whence it follows that all creatures, being limited, are also comprehensible; but that Divine Being alone, being

Infinite, is Incomprehensible to all created understandings. For, as Aristotle says, that which is Infinite, as it has no end, can be comprehended and embraced by no understanding, save that alone which comprehends all things. What was meant by the two Seraphim that Isaiah saw beside the Majesty of GOD, sitting on an exceeding high throne, each of them having six wings, with two of which he covered the Face of GOD, and with two the Feet of GOD, (Isa. vi. 2,) as it has been interpreted, but to give us to understand that not even those exalted Spirits that occupy the highest place in Heaven, and that are nearest to GOD, can comprehend all that there is in GOD, or know Him thoroughly, although they see Him plainly in His own Essence and in His Beauty. For as one who stands upon the sea-shore, does indeed see the sea itself, but is not able to see either its depth or its extent, so those exalted Spirits and all the other chosen ones, who dwell in Heaven, do indeed see GOD, but are not able to comprehend either the abyss of His Greatness or the length of His Eternity. And for the same reason it is said that GOD sitteth "upon the Cherubim," (Song of the Three Children, v. 32; Ps. xcix. 1,) in whom are contained all the treasures of Divine Wisdom. Yet He is above them, because they cannot attain to Him or comprehend Him.

This is the "darkness" which the Prophet David says that GOD has placed round about His Pavilion (Ps. xviii. 11), signifying the same thing which the Apostle expresses more clearly when he says that He dwells "in the Light which no man can approach unto." (1 Tim. vi. 16.) The Prophet calls this Light darkness, because it hinders the sight and comprehension of GOD. For, as a philosopher has well said, there is nothing brighter or more visible than the sun, yet is there nothing that is less seen, because of its excellent brightness and the weakness of our sight; and in like manner there is nothing more intelligible in itself than GOD, and none that is less understood in this life, for the same reason.

Wherefore, if any one would know Him in any way, when He has attained to the utmost of His Perfections that he can understand, let him know that he has still an infinite distance to traverse; for He is infinitely Greater than all that has

been understood, and the more any man understands this Incomprehensibility, the more he understands of Him. Wherefore S. Gregory, writing on Job's words, "Who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number," (Job v. 9,) says, "We speak most eloquently of the works of Divine Omnipotence, when marvelling and astonished, we are silent; and then does man fitly praise by silence what he could not adequately signify by speech." And so S. Dionysius counsels us to honour the mystery of that Sovereign Godhead Which transcends all understandings, with sacred veneration of the soul, and with ineffable and chaste silence. In which words he seems to allude to those of the Prophet David, according to S. Jerome's translation, "Praise is silent to Thee, O GOD, in Sion." (Ps. lxx. I, marg.) Giving us to understand that the most perfect praise is that which is given in silence, in this pure and ineffable silence, understanding that we do not understand, and confessing the Incomprehensibility and the Sovereignty of that ineffable Substance, whose Being is above all being, whose Power is above all power, whose Greatness is above all greatness, and whose Substance infinitely surpasses and differs from any other substance, visible or invisible.

In accordance with which S. Augustine says, "When I seek my GOD, I seek not form of body, nor beauty of season, nor splendour of light, nor melody of song, nor odour of flowers, nor aromatic perfumes, nor honey, nor manna delicious to the taste, nor anything that can be touched and embraced with the hands; none of these things do I seek when I seek my GOD. But yet I seek a Light above all light, that the eyes see not; and a Voice above all voices, that the ears perceive not; and a Perfume above all perfumes, that the nostrils smell not; and a Sweetness above all sweets, that the taste knows not; and an Embrace above all embraces, that the touch feels not; for this Light shines where there is no space, and this Voice sounds where the air carries it not, and this Perfume is perceived where the wind diffuses it not, and this sweet Savour delights where there is no palate to relish it, and this Embrace is received where it shall never be unclasped."

If thou wilt form some idea of GOD'S Incomprehensible Good-



ness, by a little example, look upon the structure of this universe, which is "His Handiwork," (Ps. xix. 1,) that by the nature of the effect thou mayest understand something of the greatness of the Cause. (Rom. i. 20.) Remember first what S. Dionysius says, that all things have essence, power, and operation, and that these are so proportioned, that the power of every thing is equal to its essence, and its operation to its power. Having laid down this rule, consider how beautiful, how well ordered, and how great this universe is ; for there are some stars in the sky, which the astrologers say are many times larger than all the earth and the sea together. Look also how populous it is with an endless variety of things that dwell in the earth, the air, the water, and everywhere, and these all so perfectly formed that, except in the case of monsters, there never has been found in any either superfluity or aught that lacked for its completeness. Now, this admirable structure of the universe (it is S. Augustine's opinion) GOD created in one moment, and brought out of nonentity into existence, and this without having materials to make it, or labourers to assist Him, or tools to use, or models and designs wherein to trace it, or length of time to persevere and finish it, but with one simple declaration of His will this innumerable host and multitude of things were produced. Consider also that as easily as He created the world, He could create, if He pleased, thousands of millions of worlds, far greater, far more beautiful, far more populous than this ; and that, when He had made them, He could as easily destroy and annihilate them, without any resistance.

Now since, as we have laid down from S. Dionysius, by the effect and operation of a thing we know its power, and by its power its essence, what must that Power be from which these works proceed ? And if this Power is so great and incomprehensible, what must that Essence be that is known by this Power ? This altogether surpasses all expression and understanding. Yet there is still more to consider ; for these great works—those that are and those that may be—are not equal to the Greatness of that Divine Power, but infinitely below it, for that Infinite Power extends infinitely further. Who but must be overwhelmed with amazement when he considers the Greatness

of this Essence, and of this Power! For though he sees it not with his eyes, he cannot fail to have some intimation in this way how great and how incomprehensible it is.

S. Thomas declares this infinite Immensity of GOD in his Compendium of Theology, by this example. We see, he says, that in material things the more excellent is always greatest in quantity. We see that water is greater than earth, and air than water, and fire than air, and the first heaven than the element of fire, and the second heaven than the first, and the third heaven than the second; and so on, ascending to the tenth sphere, and to the empyreal Heaven, which is inestimably and inconceivably great. We see this clearly by the littleness of the whole earth and seas in comparison with the skies, for the astrologers say that it is in proportion but a little speck. And they prove it plainly, for the circle of the sky is divided into twelve signs, through which the sun passes, and six of them can be seen plainly from every part of the earth, because the height and eminence of the earth takes up no more space than a sheet of paper, or a board placed in the middle of the world, from which half the sky might be seen without impediment. Now, since the empyreal Heaven, which is the first and noblest thing in the universe, is so inestimably greater than all other things, hereby we understand, says S. Thomas, that GOD Who is without any limitation the First, the Greatest, and the Best of all things, spiritual as well as corporal, and the Maker of them all, must surpass them all too, with an infinite Greatness, not in quantity, because He is not a body, but in the Excellence and Glory of His most perfect Essence.

To come now to our purpose. Thou mayest hereby understand somewhat of the Perfections and Greatness of GOD, for they must necessarily be such, as His Being is. The Son of Sirach says, "As His Majesty is, so is His Mercy." And the same is true of all His other Perfections; for so is His Goodness, His Kindness, His Majesty, His Mildness, His Wisdom, His Gentleness, His Glory, His Beauty, His Omnipotence, and so also is His Justice. And thus He is infinitely Good, infinitely Gentle, infinitely Loving, and infinitely Worthy of all love, obedience, fear, honour, and reverence. So that if

the human heart were capable of infinite love, infinite fear, infinite obedience, and infinite reverence, all this would be justly due to the Dignity and Excellence of this our LORD. For if the higher and more excellent a person is, the more reverence is due to him, it follows necessarily that as GOD is infinitely Excellent, infinite reverence is due to Him. And, therefore, by how much our love and reverence fall short of this measure, by so much they fall short of what is due to His Dignity and Greatness.

How great, then, is our obligation under this Title alone, if there were no other, to love and obey This our LORD! What does he love who loves not such Goodness? What does he fear who fears not such Majesty? Whom does he serve who serves not such a Master? What was the will made for, but to embrace and love goodness? Then, if this is the Supreme Good, why does not our will embrace It above all good things? And if it is so great an evil not to love and reverence Him above all things, what is it to value Him less than any? Who could believe that the wickedness of man would go so far? And truly they go as far as this who, for a brutish pleasure, for a punctilio of honour, or for an insignificant profit, despise and offend His Goodness. But those go further who sin for nought, that is, out of mere wickedness and habit, and when they have nothing to gain. Has the world become so utterly dottish as this? O unequalled blindness! O stupidity below that of brutes! O audacity worthy of devils! What do such men deserve? How can the contempt of such great Majesty be properly chastised? Assuredly by no less a punishment than is prepared for such offenders—everlasting burning in the fires of Hell, though that indeed is punishment below their deserts.

This, then, is the first Title under which we are obliged to love and serve our LORD; and so binding is its obligation, that no obligation whatever to any sort of person, or by reason of any excellence or perfection, can be called an obligation in comparison with this. For, as all created perfections, compared with those of GOD, are not perfections, so all obligations that arise from those perfections and excellencies are not to be called obligations in comparison with this; as also offences committed against mere creatures cannot be called offences compared with those

done against the Creator. Therefore David said, in the Psalm of his repentance, that he had sinned against GOD only, (Ps. li. 4); whereas he had sinned against Uriah whom he killed, against his wife whom he dishonoured, and against the whole kingdom which he scandalised. Yet after all these things he says that he had sinned against GOD only, because he knew very well that all these offences and enormities were nothing compared with the hideousness that the sin acquired, by being contrary to GOD'S Commands. And therefore this hideousness so greatly afflicted him that he thought nothing comparatively of all the rest : because as GOD is infinitely greater than any creature, so is our obligation to Him infinitely greater, and so is the offence that we commit against Him, and between the finite and the infinite there can be no proportion.

## CHAPTER II.

*Of the Second Title, under which we are obliged to Virtue and to the Service of God, namely, the Benefit of Creation.*

**W**E are obliged to keep GOD's Commandments and to practise virtue, not only for what GOD is in Himself, but also for what He is to us, that is, by reason of His innumerable benefits. And although we have treated of them elsewhere, for different purposes, we will here speak of them, to see the great obligation that we are under to serve their Giver.

The first Benefit is that of Creation, of which, because it is so well known, I will say only, that by this benefit man is bound to give himself up wholly to the service of the LORD Who created him, for by all laws a man is debtor for what he has received. Since then by this Benefit he received his existence, that is, his body with all its senses, and his soul with all its powers, it follows that he is bound to employ every one of these in the service of the Maker, on pain of being a robber and ungrateful to the Bestower of such great good. For if a man builds a house, who is to use the house but the owner who built it? And if he plants a vineyard, whose is the fruit to be but the planter's? And if he has a son, whom is the son more bound to serve than the father who begat him? And for this cause the Law sets few limits to a father's power over his children, because, as he has given them existence, he is therefore their master. If a father, then, has such rights over his son, what must He have from Whom all fatherhood is derived in Heaven and earth? (Eph. iii. 14, 15.)

And if, as Seneca says, those who receive benefits are bound to imitate fertile lands, which give much more than they receive, how can we return such gratitude as this to GOD? for whatever we may give to Him, it cannot be more than we receive. And if they fail to keep this law who give not more than they receive, what shall we say of one who does not prize even what he has received? And if, as Aristotle says, the debt that is due to GOD and to fathers cannot be entirely paid, what can be paid to GOD, Who has given us so much more than the fathers of this world? And if it is a great crime for a son to be rebellious and disobedient to his father, what is it to be so to GOD, who is a Father by so many titles, and in comparison with Whom none is worthy of the name of father? With good reason, therefore, does He complain of them by a Prophet, saying, "If I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear?" (Mal. i. 6.) And another Prophet expresses his indignation in more burning words, saying, "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy FATHER that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee, and established thee? (Deut. xxxii. 6.) These are they who neither lift up their eyes to Heaven, nor turn them inward upon themselves (Ps. xvii. 11), for if they did it they would inquire of themselves concerning themselves, and would seek to know their first origin and beginning: that is, who made them, and what he made them for, and by this they would understand what they ought to do. But because they will not do this, they live as if they had made themselves, like that unhappy King whom GOD threatened by a Prophet, saying, "Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, King of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (Ezek. xxix. 3.) These words are said at least practically by those who live in forgetfulness of their Creator, as if they had made themselves, and acknowledged no maker. The blessed S. Augustine acted otherwise: by knowledge of his origin, he aimed at knowledge of his Creator. He says in a Soliloquy, "I turned to myself, and entered into myself, and asked myself, Who art thou? And I answered myself,

A reasonable and mortal man. And I began to inquire what this was, and said, Whence, O my GOD, did this soul originate? whence but from Thee? Thou art He that made us, and not I myself. Thou art He by Whom I live, and by Whom all things live and have their being. For can any be his own fashioner? Is there any one from whom life and existence proceed besides Thee? Art not Thou the Supreme Being from Whom all being comes? Art not Thou the Fount of Life from Which all life proceeds? Thou, LORD, hast made me, and without Thee nothing is made. Thou art my Maker, and I am Thy handiwork. Thanks be given then to Thee, O LORD, by Whom I live, and all things live. Thanks to Thee, my Former, because Thy Hands have formed and fashioned me. Thanks to Thee, my Light, for by Thy Light I have found Thee, and have found myself also."

This, then, is the first of the Divine Benefits, and the foundation of all the rest. For they all presuppose existence, which is given us by this Benefit, and therefore they bear the same relation to it that accidents do to the substance with which they are connected. See how great this Benefit is, and how worthy of gratitude. Now, if GOD so carefully requires gratitude for His Benefits, which He does not for His own advantage but ours, what will He demand for this, which is the foundation of all the others? Especially as it is GOD'S way to be most bountiful in granting mercies, and most strict, if we may use the word, in exacting gratitude, not that it is any gain to Him, but because it is our obligation. Thus, we read in the Old Testament, that He had no sooner bestowed any benefit on His people, than He immediately gave orders that there should be a perpetual memorial and thanksgiving for it. He brought His people out of Egypt, and immediately, even before they came out, He ordered a most solemn feast to be kept in memory of it. (Exod. xii. 14.) He smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt for their sake, and immediately commanded that all the first-born of His people, from that time forth, should be consecrated to Him, in remembrance of this benefit. (Exod. xiii. 11-15.) He fed them with manna forty years in the wilderness, and when He began to send it, He commanded them to take a

pot, and put a certain quantity in it, and lay it up before the Testimony, that the generations to come might remember this benefit. (Exod. xvi. 32, 33.) Shortly after He gave them a signal victory over Amalek, and, as soon as it was gained, He said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." (Exod. xvii. 14.) Now, if the LORD was so very careful to provide that temporal benefits should be kept in His people's memory with everlasting thanksgiving, what thanks will He require for this immortal blessing—an undying soul? This is why the holy Patriarchs were so careful to build altars, and to set up memorials whenever they received any especial benefit from GOD, (Gen. xii. 7, 8, xiii. 4, xxii. 14;) this made them even write the memorial of the benefits that they received in the names of the children that He gave them, lest they should ever forget them. (Gen. xl. 1.) And from this a Saint concludes, that we ought to remember GOD oftener than we draw our breath: for, as we always are, so we ought always to be giving thanks for the existence that we have received.

So firm is the bond of this obligation, that even the philosophers of this world cry aloud to men not to be ungrateful to GOD. Epictetus, a renowned Stoic philosopher, speaks thus: "O man, be not ungrateful to that Supreme Power, but give Him thanks for the senses of sight and hearing, and far more for the life that He has given thee, and for the things wherewith it is sustained, for ripe fruits, and wine, and oil, and all His other gifts, and far more for the gift of reason which enables thee to use them all, and to know their value." Now, if a heathen philosopher demands this gratitude of us for these common gifts, what should be the thanks of a Christian, who has so much more light of faith, and who has received so much more!

But thou wilt say, perchance, These common benefits are rather works of nature than Gifts of GOD. What do I owe Him especially for the order and arrangement of things that always follow their regular course? These are not the words of a Christian, but of a heathen; nay, not of a heathen, but of a brute. That thou mayest see this clearly, hear the reproof of the same philosopher, who says, "Wilt thou say that thou

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receivest these benefits from Nature? O ungrateful! Dost not thou understand that thou art only changing the Name of GOD? What is Nature but GOD, Who is the essence of Nature? Thus, thou thankless man, thou dost not excuse thyself by saying that thou owest this debt to Nature, and not to GOD, seeing that there is no Nature apart from GOD. If thou borrowest something of Lucius Seneca, and then sayest that thy debt is to Lucius, and not to Seneca, thou dost not change thy creditor, but only his name."

But not only this obligation of justice, but also our own need and poverty compel us to have this regard to our Creator, if after our creation we desire to attain to our proper felicity and perfection. To understand this, know that all things that are born are usually imperfect at their birth. Something they have, and something is lacking, which must be completed after, and the completion must be given by the hand that commenced the work, so that the beginning and the completion proceed from the same cause. And therefore all effects in general return to these causes to receive their final perfection. Plants stretch upwards towards the sun and root themselves as deeply as they can in the soil which gives them life. Fish will not leave the water which engendered them. A chicken, as soon as it is hatched, creeps under the hen's wings, and follows her wherever she goes. And a lamb does the same, keeping close to its mother's side, knowing her amongst a thousand mothers of the same colour, and cleaving to her, as if it would say, "Here I got what I have, here I shall receive what I lack."

This is universally the case with natural things, and it would be so with works of art, if they had sense or movement. If a painter finished a figure, but omitted the eyes, and the figure could feel the want, what would it do? where would it go? Certainly not to the house of a king or a prince, for they, as such, could not satisfy its desire, but to the house of the artist, whom it would entreat to finish perfecting it. And wherein, O reasonable creature, does thy case differ from this? Thou art not yet finished. Much is wanting to make thee completely perfect. The design is hardly finished, all the brilliancy and beauty of the work are yet to be given. And this is shown

plainly by the continual hungering of nature **itself**, which feeling itself in want, can never rest, but is continually crying and sighing for more. GOD has been pleased to take thee by hunger, to make thy very necessities bring thee to His doors, and lead thee to Him. This is why He would not finish thee at first : this is why He did not enrich thee at once ; not because He grudges His gifts, but because He loves ; not to make thee poor, but humble ; not that thou mayest be in necessity, but to keep thee ever with Him. If then thou art poor, and blind, and needy, why dost thou not go to the Father Who begat thee, and to the Painter Who began thee, that He may finish what is wanting ? See how David did this, "Thy Hands," he said, "have made me and fashioned me : O give me understanding, that I may learn Thy Commandments," (Ps. cxix. 73,) which may be explained more fully thus, "Thy Hands, O LORD, have made all that there is in me, but the work is still unfinished ; the eyes of my soul, amongst other things, are yet unfinished ; I have not light to know what is good for me ; of whom shall I ask what is lacking, but of Him Who gave what I have ? Give me this light, Lord, open the eyes of one born blind," (S. John ix. 2,) "that he may know Thee ; and thus complete what Thou hast begun in me."

And as it thus belongs to our LORD to give its ultimate perfection to the understanding, so it appertains to Him also to give it to the will, and to all the other faculties of the soul, so that the work may be finished by the Same Who began it. He Alone it is Who satisfies perfectly, Who exalts noiselessly, Who enriches quietly, and Who gives perfect rest and peace without great possessions. With Him the creature is content in poverty, rich in nakedness, blessed in loneliness, lord of all things in destitution. And therefore the wise man saith, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing ; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." (Prov. xiii. 7.) For the poor man who has GOD, like S. Francis, is very rich ; but the man who has not GOD is very poor, though he be lord of the world. For what does all his wealth avail a rich and mighty man, who lives full of cares and longings which all his riches cannot satisfy ! And what power have costly garments, and a

delicate table, and a full coffer to take away the anguish of the soul? The rich man turns and tosses in his soft bed the whole night through, and his full purse does not hinder it.

From all this it follows, that we are bound to serve our LORD, not only as a debt for this Benefit, but also by our need of what is yet wanting to our happiness and restoration.

### CHAPTER III.

*Of the Third Title under which we are obliged to God's Service; the Benefit of Preservation and Guidance.*

**M**AN is bound to GOD'S service, not only by the Benefit of creation, but also by that of preservation ; for He made thee, and He also preserves thee now thou art made. So that at this minute thou art as dependent on the Hand of GOD, and as little capable of living without Him, as thou wert of beginning to exist without Him. This is no less a benefit than the former ; but that He did once, and this He is ever doing, for He is continually creating thee in continually renewing what He has created, and no less Power and Love is required for one than for the other. If then thou owest Him so much for creating thee in one instant, what dost thou owe Him for preserving thee in so many ? Thou dost not take a step without His moving thee to do it. Thou dost not open or shut thine eyes, but His Hand is there. For if thou dost not believe that GOD moves thy limbs when thou movest them, thou art not a Christian ; and if thou believest that He does this for thee, and yet offendest Him, truly I know not what to call thee.

If a man stood on a very high tower, holding another suspended outside the battlements by a very thin cord, would the man who hung there dare burst out into violent language against his upholder ? Then if thou art hanging by the little thread of GOD'S absolute Will, so that if He let thee go, thou wouldst in one instant return to nothingness, how then art thou daring enough to provoke the wrath of That Glorious and Exalted One Who is still sustaining thee at the very time that thou art

offending Him? For as S. Dionysius says, the virtue of the Supreme Good is so excellent and so immense, that even when His creatures oppose Him, it is from that very Virtue that they receive the existence and power whereby they resist. How darest thou then with these members and senses offend thy very LORD Who gave them to thee? Incredible revolt and blindness! Was ever such a conspiracy seen, the members rising up against the Head, for which naturally they should face death? A day will come when this offence shall cease, and when the plea of the Divine Honour shall be heard against thee. Have you conspired against GOD? It is just the universe shall conspire against you; that GOD shall "make the creature His weapon for the revenge of His enemies," and that "the world shall fight with Him against the unwise." (Wisdom. v. 17, 20.) For it is just that they who refused to open their eyes in time, at the call of so many benefits, should be made to open them by so many chastisements, when the time of amendment is past.

To this consideration add that of the rich and plenteous table of the world, which our LORD has made for thy service. All things under the sky, are either for man, or for things useful to man. For if he does not eat the gnat that flies in the air, the bird on which he feeds eats it; and if he does not browse the grass of the field, the flocks and herds which he needs browse it. Stretch out thine eyes through the whole world, and see how wide and spacious are the boundaries of thy dominion, how rich and plentiful is thy heritage. All that walks on the earth, all that swims in the water, all that flies in the air, and all that shines in the sky is thine." (Ps. viii. 6-8.) For all these things are benefits of GOD, works of His Providence, specimens of His Beauty, tokens of His Mercy, sparks of His Charity, and proclaimers of His Bounty. See how many preachers GOD has sent to bring thee to the knowledge of Him. "All things in heaven and earth," says S. Augustine, "tell me to love Thee, O LORD, and they say the same unceasingly to all, that none may have an excuse."

If thou hadst ears to hear the voices of the creatures, thou wouldst perceive undoubtedly that they all agree in telling thee to love GOD; for they all tell thee wordlessly that they were

created for thy service, in order that thou mightst love and serve their LORD and thine for them and for thyself. The sky says, "I light thee day and night with my stars, that thou mayest not walk in darkness, and I send various influences for the nourishment of things, that thou mayest not die of hunger." The air says, "I give thee breath of life and I refresh thee, I temper thy inward heat, lest it consume thee, I have in me many varieties of birds, to gratify thine eyes with their beauty, thy ears with their song, and thy palate with their flavour." The water says, "I serve thee with the early and latter rain in their seasons, and with rivers and springs to refresh thee, and I nourish innumerable varieties of fish for thy eating; I water the fields and orchards that sustain thee, I give thee a short and straight way across the seas, that thou mayest make use of the whole world, and join the abundance of foreign lands to thine own." And the earth, what does she say—that common mother of all—that general laboratory of all natural causes? The earth also says with good reason, "As a mother I carry thee on my shoulders, I provide thee with food, I sustain thee with my fruits, I hold intercourse and communication with all the elements and with all the heavens, and from all I receive influences and benefits for thy service; yea, as a good mother, I forsake thee not in life nor yet in death; in life I carry thee on my shoulders and nourish thee, in death I give thee a place of rest, and receive thee into my lap." Finally, the whole world cries aloud, and very loudly to thee, saying, "Behold how greatly my LORD and Maker loved thee, for He created me for thee, and He requires me to serve thee for His sake, that thou mayest serve and love Him Who created me for thee, and thee for Himself."

These, O Christian, are the voices of all creation; none can be more deaf than he who is deaf to these voices, and ungrateful for these Benefits. If thou receivest the Benefit, pay the debt of thankfulness, lest thou have to pay the penalty of ingratitude. For every creature, a doctor tells us, utters these three words to man, "Accipe, Redde, Cave. Hoc est, Accipe Beneficium; Redde debitum; Cave (nisi reddideris) supplicium." Which means, "Receive, Pay, and Fear. Receive the Benefit, pay

the debt of gratitude; and fear the punishment, if thou payest it not." So speaks Richard S. Victor.

But to astonish thee still more, know that Epictetus the philosopher, whom we mentioned above, attained to this knowledge of GOD, for he desires us in all created things to hear and see the Creator, speaking thus, "If the crow cries, and warns thee of a change in the weather, it is not the crow that warns thee, but GOD. And if thou art informed of anything by a human voice and human words, did not GOD also create the man, and give him capacity to inform thee, showing thee that the Divine Being can use what means He pleases. For when He is pleased to warn us of great things, He sends great and exalted messengers." And he concludes thus, "When thou hast read all these words, say to thyself, These things were not told me by Epictetus the philosopher, but by GOD, for Whom he had the power to tell them. It is not he but GOD then, Who says them, by him." These are the words of Epictetus. What Christian would not be ashamed of not attaining as high as a heathen philosopher has done? It is shameful, indeed, that the eyes that are enlightened with the light of faith should see less than those that sat in the darkness of reason.

Now seeing that these things are so, what ingratitude is it to be thus inundated with GOD'S Benefits, and to forget their Giver! S. Paul says that one who does good to his enemy, heaps coals of fire on his head, to kindle him with love. (Rom. xii. 20.) Then if every creature in this world is a benefit from GOD, is not the whole world a fire, and all the creatures therein fuel? What a heart must that be that can walk in the midst of this great flame, not only without burning, but without feeling the heat! How canst thou receive benefits continually, without so much as lifting up thine eyes to heaven to see who does thee so much good? If going on a journey, thou satest down weary and ready to die for hunger at the foot of a tower, and some one kindly provided for all thy needs from the top, couldst thou help lifting up thine eyes sometimes to look at thy purveyor? And what is GOD doing, but continually raining benefits on thee from above? Tell me only one of all the things in the world, that does not come by GOD'S especial Providence.

Then why dost thou not sometimes lift up thine eyes to know and to love so Bountiful and so Continual a Benefactor? Truly, men must have lost their very nature and have become more insensible than brutes. It is a very shameful thing to say what we are like, but it is right that a man should hear what he deserves. We are like those brutish animals that stand under the oak, and while their master is beating down the acorns from above, they are so busy in eating and quarrelling over their food that they never look at the giver, or lift up their eyes to see from whose hand the food comes. O brutish ingratitude of the sons of Adam, who, being possessed of reason, and formed moreover to walk upright, with bodily eyes turned towards the heavens, will not let the eyes of their soul follow to see Who does them good!

But would to GOD we were no worse than the brutes in this matter! For the law of gratitude is so general, and GOD so loves it, that He has endued even savage beasts with this generous inclination, as appears from many examples. What is fiercer than a lion? Yet Apion, a Greek author, writes, that one divided the prey that he took every day with a man who was concealed in a cave, because he had drawn out a thorn that had got fixed in his foot; and that after many days this man, for his misdeeds, was cast to the same lion in the amphitheatre at Rome, and the lion looked at him, knew him, and came up to him affectionately, fondling him as a dog does his master when he comes home. And after this he followed him, without hurting anybody, through the streets of Rome. We read also of another lion which had received the same benefit from a man who landed in Africa, and which brought him every day some of the meat that he took, so that the man and his companions lived on it till they re-embarked. No less remarkable is the account of another lion, which was fighting with a serpent, and was hard pressed and almost killed, when a sportsman seeking game in those parts, came to the lion's assistance, and killed the serpent, in return for which the lion always followed him, and served him in the chase like a dog: and when the sportsman once went on shipboard, leaving the lion on land, it plunged into the water to swim after his benefactor, and was drowned. Then what shall



I say of the faithfulness and gratitude of horses? Pliny writes of some who so grieved for their masters' death as to shed tears for them, and of others who died of hunger for the same cause, and of others who took vengeance on their masters' slayers by tearing them with their teeth. And what shall I say of the gratitude of dogs, of which the same author writes strange things. He writes of one whose master was killed by robbers, who after fighting valiantly against them, stationed himself by the dead body, guarding it, and driving away the birds and beasts that they might not eat it. He tells of another that saw its master, Jason Lucius, dead, and would never eat again, but died of hunger. And in his own days he says that a more remarkable thing occurred in Rome. A man was condemned to death, and his dog, which never left him in prison, would not forsake him in death, but continued by his side making dismal howlings, and when a piece of bread was thrown to him, he took it in his mouth, and put it to his master's lips, and when the body was thrown into the Tiber, the dog plunged in after it, and put itself underneath to support it, that it might not sink. What can be more wonderful or show more gratitude than this! And if brutes, which have no reason, but only a spark of natural instinct to perceive a benefit, are so grateful for it, give such service in return, and so cleave to their benefactors, how is it that man who has so much more light to know the good that he receives, lives in such forgetfulness of the Giver? Why does he let the brutes surpass him in humanity, in loyalty, and in gratitude? Especially seeing that what man receives of GOD is so much more than all that brutes can receive from man, and that the Person Who gives it is so much more excellent, as well as the Love with which it is given, and the Intention, which is not self-interest, but free grace and love. It is assuredly a marvellous thing, and manifestly declares that there are devils who blind our understandings, and harden our wills, and vitiate our memories, to hinder us from remembering such a Benefactor.

And if it be so great a fault to forget our LORD, how far greater must it be to offend Him, and to offend Him with His own benefits. Seneca says that the first degree of ingratitude is not to return benefits to our benefactor, the second to forget

them in our heart, the third to injure those who have done us good, and this seems to be the greatest possible. What then if thou hurtest and offendest thy Benefactor with the very Gifts that He gave thee? I do not know if any man in the world ever dealt with another man as men have dealt with GOD. Could the most unfeeling man, on receiving great gifts from his sovereign, go immediately and spend those gifts in raising an army against him? But thou, O miserable man, with the very gifts that GOD gave thee, art incessantly making war upon Him. What worse abomination can there be? How treacherous would a wife be who took the very jewels that her husband had sent her to adorn her and to make her love him more, and give them to another man, in order to attract his attention and to secure his affection? (See Ezek. xvi.) If it is possible to depict anything hideous in the world it is this: yet here the injury is done only by one human being to another, by an equal to an equal. How much greater fault is it then, when such an injury is done to GOD. Yet men are doing this very thing when they spend the strength, the health, and the property that GOD has given them on sin? With strength they grow proud, with beauty vain, with health forgetful of GOD, with riches more powerful to injure the poor, to rival their betters, to indulge the flesh, to buy the chastity of a woman, to induce her like a second Judas to sell the price of CHRIST'S precious Blood, (S. Matt. xxvi. 15), and to buy it themselves for money as the Jews did. And what shall I say of the abuse of all His other benefits? They use the sea for their gluttony, the beauty of creatures for their lusts, the fruits and productions of the earth for their covetousness, their natural gifts and talents for their pride. Prosperity turns their brain, they faint in adversity. "In the dark they dig through houses which they had marked for themselves in the daytime," as Job says. (Job xxiv. 16.) In short, all that GOD has created in this world for His Glory, they have offered to the caprices of their folly.

But what shall I say of their essences, their perfumes, their dresses, their embroideries, their soups and various dishes, of which for our sins, books have not only been written, but

printed. To such a pitch have gratification and self-indulgence come. All those precious things, for which they ought to give GOD praise, they use as food for their lusts, perverting all GOD'S creatures, and using as instruments of vanity things given for instruments of virtue. In short, they devote everything in the world to the indulgence of their own flesh, and none to the poor, whom GOD commended to them. Towards Him alone they are poor, for Him they remember that they have debts; for everything else they are neither in debt nor in scarcity.

Do not wait then, Brother, to have this most perilous accusation brought against thee at the hour of death: the heavier it is, the stricter account thou wilt have to give. It is a kind of judgment to give much to one who has little gratitude, and it is a token of reprobation to give to one who always misuses the gift. Let us account it the greatest possible disgrace that the brutes surpass us in this virtue, for they are always thankful to their benefactors, and we are not. And if "the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment," and shall condemn the Jews because they repented not at CHRIST'S Preaching, (S. Matt. xii. 41), let us beware lest the same Judge condemn us by the example of the brutes, because they loved their benefactors, and we did not.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Of the Fourth Title, under which we are obliged to Virtue,  
namely, the Inestimable Benefit of our Redemption.*

**L**ET us come to the inestimable Benefit of our Redemption. When I would speak of this Mystery, truly I find myself so unworthy, so incapable, so limited, that I know not where to begin or where to end, or what to say, or what to leave unsaid. If the sloth of man did not need these incentives to live well, it would be better to adore the depth of this Mystery in silence than to obscure it by the rudeness of our speech. It is related of a celebrated painter that he made a picture of the death of a king's daughter, and when he had depicted her relations round about her with sad countenances, and her mother far sadder, and had now to draw the father's countenance, he purposely covered it with a shadow, to show that art failed to express so great a grief as this. But if all that we can do is insufficient to explain only the Benefit of Creation, what eloquence will suffice to magnify that of Redemption? By one simple expression of His Will GOD created all the things in the world; yet was His Power inexhausted, and His Arm strong when He had created them. But to redeem it, He toiled for three-and-thirty years, and shed all His Blood, and there remained in Him no Member and no Sense that did not suffer pain. It appears a degradation of such great Mysteries to declare them with a fleshly tongue. What shall I do then? Shall I be silent, or shall I speak? I may not be silent, I cannot speak. How shall I be silent of such great Mercies? How shall I speak of such ineffable Mysteries? To be silent is ingratitude, to speak appears pre-

sumption. Wherefore, O my GOD, I now beseech Thy infinite Compassion, that whilst in my ignorance and incapacity, I am detracting from Thy Glory, in my very attempt to magnify and declare it, they who know how to praise Thee may glorify Thee in Heaven that they may set in order what I disorder, and that they may illumine what man tarnishes by his want of knowledge.

When man had been created, and placed by the Hand of GOD in the garden of delight in such great dignity and glory, (Gen. ii. 8, 9, 15-17), when every Gift that he had received from his Creator ought to have bound him more to His service, he appropriated all to himself, and in those things which ought to have been motives for love, he found incentives to treason. (Gen. iii. 1-7.) For this cause he was driven out of Paradise into the banishment of this world, and condemned to the pains of hell, (Gen. iii. 24 ; Rom. v. 12), that as he had been the devil's companion in sin, he might be so also in punishment. The Prophet said to his servant Gehazi when he had received the gifts of Naaman the leper, "Hast thou taken Naaman's gifts? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." (2 Kings v. 27.) This was GOD's sentence against man, that, as he chose the riches of Lucifer, that is, the sin of pride, the leprosy of Lucifer, that is, its punishment should also cleave to him. Behold man then made like unto the devil, the imitator of his fault and the companion of his everlasting punishment.

Man being then so fallen in the Sight of GOD, and so entirely out of His Favour, that LORD, no less great in Mercy than in Majesty, vouchsafed to look not upon the injury done to His sovereign Goodness, but on the wretchedness of our misery, and feeling more pity for our fault than anger at His own dishonour, He determined to restore man by means of His Only-Begotten SON, and to reconcile him with Himself. But how did He reconcile him? How can mortal tongue declare it? He made such great amity between GOD and man, that He accomplished, not only that GOD should pardon man, and restore him to His Grace, and make Himself One with him by love, but, which transcends all expression, He made him so entirely

One with Him, that in all that He has created, there is nothing more one than these two are now : for they are not only one in love and in grace, but also in Person. Who could ever have thought that this breach would be thus united? Who could have imagined that these two things, between which nature and sin had made so wide a distance, would be united, not in one house, nor in one table, nor in one grace, but in One Person? What more distant than GOD and the sinner? What now more united than GOD and Man? "There is nothing," says S. Bernard, "higher than GOD, and nothing lower than the clay of which man was formed ; yet with such Humility has GOD descended to the clay, and with such Dignity has the clay ascended to GOD, that all that GOD has done, we say was done by the Clay, and all that the Clay has endured we say that GOD suffered."

Who would have told the man, when he saw his nakedness, and felt himself at enmity with GOD, and sought amongst the trees of the garden for a place to hide himself, that a time would come when his vile substance should be joined in One Person with Him? So close and so faithful was this junction, that when it had to be broken, at the time of the Passion, it brake rather than dissevered, for it failed not at the juncture, but at the sound part, for death could separate the soul from the body to which it was joined by nature, but it could not separate GOD either from the soul or from the body to which He was joined by the Divine Person, for what He once took for love of us, He never left.

This is the peace and this the remedy that came to us by the Hands of our SAVIOUR and Mediator. And although we are more indebted to Him for this remedy than mortal tongue can express, we owe no less for the manner of our restoration than for the remedy itself. Much do I owe Thee, O my GOD, because Thou hast delivered me from Hell, and hast reconciled me with Thyself, but far more do I owe Thee for the way in which Thou hast delivered me than for the deliverance itself. All Thy works are marvellous in all things, and when it seems to a man that he has no spirit left to look upon one, this wonder is effaced, when he lifts up his eyes, and be-

holds another. It is no dishonour, LORD, to Thy Greatness, that they efface one another, it is a manifestation of Thy Glory.

For what means didst Thou take, O LORD, for my restoration? There were innumerable means whereby Thou mightest have given me entire healing, without labour or cost to Thyself, but so great and marvellous was Thy Munificence, that to show me more evidently the greatness of Thy Love and Goodness, Thou wert pleased to restore me with such great sufferings, that the very thought of them was enough to make Thee sweat Blood, (S. Luke xxii. 44), and Thy endurance of them rent the rocks with sorrow. (S. Matt. xxvii. 51.) Let the heavens praise Thee, O LORD, and let the Angels ever declare Thy Wonders. What need hadst Thou of our good, or what harm came to Thee by our evil? "If thou sinnest," saith Elihu, "what doest thou against Him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He of thine hand?" (Job xxxv. 6, 7.) This GOD then, so Rich, so free from all evil, He Whose Riches, Whose Power, Whose Wisdom can neither increase, nor be greater than they are, He Who neither before the Creation of the world, nor after it was created, is greater or less than He was; Who is not in Himself more Honourable if all Angels and men are saved and praise Him, nor less Glorious if all are lost and blaspheme Him; this Great LORD, not out of necessity, but charity, when we were His enemies and traitors, thought fit to bow the heavens of His Greatness, to come down to this place of banishment, to clothe Himself with our mortality, to take upon Him our debts, and to suffer for them the greatest torments that ever were or will be suffered. (See Eph. ii.; Col. ii.; Rom. v.)

For me, LORD, Thou wert born in a stable, for me Thou wert laid in a manger, (S. Luke ii. 7), for me circumcised on the eighth day, (S. Luke ii. 21), for me banished into Egypt, (S. Matt. ii. 14), and for me persecuted and maltreated with every kind of injury. For me Thou didst fast, and watch, and journey, and toil, and weep, and know by experience all the miseries that my sin deserved, whereas Thou wert not the culprit, but the offended person. (S. Matt. xxvi. and xxvii.) For me Thou

wert seized, forsaken, sold, denied, brought before various tribunals and judges, and before all accused, buffeted, defamed, spit upon, mocked, scourged, blasphemed, slain, and buried. Thou didst deliver me at last by dying upon a cross, and ending Thy life in the presence of Thy most Holy Mother, in such great poverty that Thou hadst not a single drop of water at the hour of Thy death, and so deserted by all, that Thy very FATHER had forsaken Thee. (S. John xix. ; Ps. xxii. and lxix. ; S. Matt. xxvii.) What can be more amazing than to see a GOD so great and glorious end His life thus on a tree in the character of a malefactor!

When a man of the lowest class comes to this by his own fault, if perchance thou hast known him before, and thou drawest nigh to see his face, thou canst hardly cease from wondering, considering the degradation to which he has fallen, that he should come to such an end as this. But if it be a startling thing to see a man of low class in such a place, what is it to see the LORD of all creation there? What is it to see GOD in a place which is a degradation to a malefactor? And if the higher and better known the sufferer is, his fall terrifies us the more, say, O ye blessed Angels, who so well know the Greatness of this LORD, what did ye feel when ye saw Him there? The two Cherubims, whom GOD commanded to be put at the two ends of the ark of the testimony, look one to another, with their faces toward the mercy-seat, (Exod. xxv. 20), as if astonished, to show how amazed those lofty spirits are, when they consider this most moving act, when they see GOD made a propitiation for the world on that holy tree. Nature remains astonished, all creatures in suspense, all the principalities and powers of heaven wondering at the inestimable Goodness which they see in GOD. Who but must sink under the wave of such great marvels! Who but must drown in the ocean of such compassion! Who but will be transported out of himself, as Moses was on the mount, when GOD showed him the type of this Mystery! Who but must cover his eyes (1 Kings xix. 13) like the prophet Elijah when he sees GOD pass by, not with steps of majesty, but of humility: not rending the mountains and

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breaking in pieces the rocks with His Omnipotence ; but fallen on the ground before the wicked, and rending the rocks with compassion ! (S. Matt. xxvii. 51.) Who but will shut the eyes of his understanding, and open the whole capacity of his will, to feel the greatness of this Love and of this Benefit, and to love as much as he can without limit and without measure ! O most exalted Charity ! O lowliest Humility ! O greatest Mercy ! O abyss of incomprehensible Goodness !

And if I owe Thee so much, LORD, because Thou hast redeemed me, what do I owe Thee for this manner of Redemption ? Thou hast redeemed me with unspeakable pain and shame, by becoming "a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxii. 6.) By this shame Thou hast honoured me, by these accusations Thou hast defended me, with this Blood Thou hast washed me, by this Death Thou hast quickened me, by these Thy Tears Thou hast delivered me from the everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. O Good FATHER Who thus lovest Thy children ! O Good Shepherd Who thus givest Thyself as Food and Sustenance to Thy flock ! O Faithful Keeper Who thus givest Thyself to death for those whom Thou hast undertaken to guard ! What gifts can I give in return for this Gift ? What tears for these Tears ? What life should I pay for this Life ? What is the life of man beside the Life of GOD ? or what the tears of a creature beside the Tears of his Creator ?

And if it seem to thee, O man, that thou owest Him not so much because He suffered not for thee alone, but also for all, be not deceived, for truly He suffered in such manner for all, that He suffered also for each. For in His infinite Wisdom He had all for whom He suffered as present before His eyes, as if they had been but one ; and in His unbounded Charity He embraced each and all, and shed His Blood for each as for all. Truly His Charity was so great, that, as the Saints say, if one alone of all men had been guilty, He would have suffered for him alone what He suffered for all. See now what thou owest to this thy LORD, Who has done so much for thee, and Who would have done so much more if thou hadst needed it.

Let all creatures now tell me if a greater benefit, a greater

obligation, a greater favour is possible. Let all the companies of Angels say, if GOD has done as much for them. Who is there, then, that will not give himself up wholly to the service of such a Master? "Thrice," says S. Anselm, "I owe Thee, LORD, all that I am. Because Thou didst create me, I owe Thee all that is in me. And because Thou hast redeemed me, I owe Thee even more justly the same debt. And because Thou dost promise Thyself to me as a reward, again I owe myself entirely to Thee. How can I then fail to give myself once to Him to Whom so many times I owe myself?" O hardness and ingratitude of the human heart, if it is not conquered by such benefits! There is nothing so hard that it cannot by some means be softened. Metals melt in the fire; iron yields to the forge; the hardness of the diamond is overcome by the blood of beasts. But oh, heart harder than stone, than iron, than diamond, thou art softened neither by the fires of hell, nor by the Kindness of so compassionate a FATHER, nor by the Blood of the LAMB without spot shed for thee!

And since Thou hast shown such Goodness and such Mercy to men, is it a thing to be endured, O LORD, that there shall be any who love Thee not; that there shall be any one who forgets these benefits; any one who still offends Thee? Whom can he love who loves not Thee? For what benefits is he thankful who is unthankful for Thine? How can I fail to serve One who has so loved me, so sought me, so restored me? "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," says the SAVIOUR, "will draw all men unto Me." (S. John xii. 32.) By what power? By what chains? By the power of love, and by the chains of benefits. "I drew them," says the LORD, "with cords of a man, with bands of love." (Hosea xi. 4.) Who will not be drawn with these cords? Who will not be bound with these chains? Who will not be overcome by such benefits?

And if it be so great a fault not to love such a Master what must it be to offend Him, and to break His commandments? How canst thou have hands to offend those Hands, that were so liberal to thee, even fastening themselves upon the Cross? When the wicked woman solicited the holy patriarch

Joseph to act treacherously towards his master, the holy youth defended himself in these words : " Behold, all that my master hath is committed to my hands, neither hath he kept back anything from me save thee, because thou art his wife ; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD ?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) As much as to say, " Seeing that my master has been so good and so liberal to me, and that he has put all that he has in my hands ; that he has so honoured me, so trusted all things to me ; how can I, bound with the chains of so many benefits, have hands wherewith to offend so good a master?" And it is to be observed, that he did not merely say, " I ought not," or " It is not right to do it," but " How can I do it ?"—giving us to understand that great benefits should take away not only the will, but in a manner the power and capacity to offend our benefactor.

And if these benefits deserved such gratitude, what do those of GOD deserve ? Potiphar put all that he had in Joseph's hands. GOD has put almost all that He has in thine. Consider how much more GOD has than Potiphar had ; for so much more is what thou hast received than what Joseph received. For what does GOD possess that He has not put in thy hands ? Heaven, earth, sun, moon, and stars, rivers, seas, birds, fishes, trees, beasts ; all things under the heaven are put in thy hands. (Ps. viii.) And not only all things under the heaven, but all that is above it, the glory of the life to come, and all its treasures and good things. " All things," says the Apostle, " are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours." (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.) All help to your salvation. And not only all that is above the heavens, but also the LORD of Heaven Himself has given Himself to us in a thousand ways : as a Father, a Guardian, a Saviour, a Master, a Physician, a Price, an Example, as Sustenance, as Medicine, as Reward. Finally, the FATHER has given us His SON. The SON has obtained for us the HOLY GHOST. The HOLY GHOST makes us worthy to obtain the FATHER and the SON, from Whom all good things proceed.

Now, if GOD has indeed put in thy hands all that He has, how canst thou have hands to sin against so bountiful and so compassionate a Benefactor? It is an extreme evil to be ungrateful for such great benefits; what is it then to add to ingratitude contempt and offences against the Benefactor? If Joseph felt himself so bound and so incapable of offending the man who had put all his property into his hands, how hast thou power to offend Him who has put heaven and earth and Himself into thy hands? More ungrateful art thou than the brutes, more savage than wild beasts, more insensible than senseless things, if thou lament not this evil! For what savage beast, what lion, what tiger, turns his fury on those who do him good? S. Ambrose writes of a dog, that it continued a whole night howling and lamenting over its master, who had been slain by an enemy; and that when, next morning, many people came to see the dead man, and amongst them the slayer, he immediately rushed upon him, and by biting and barking made known his secret crime. Dogs for a piece of bread are so faithful and loving to their masters. Shall a dog surpass thee in gratitude and fidelity? And if this animal was so angry with him who slew his master, wilt not thou be angry with those who slew thine? And consider who it was that slew Him; it was thy sin. It was this that took Him, that bound Him, scourged Him, nailed Him to the Cross: thy sin, I say, did these things. For the executioners would have had no power to do it but for thy sins. Wilt thou not then be angry with these cruel murderers who took thy Master's Life? And when thou seest Him dead before thee, and for thy sake, wilt not thy love of Him, and thy abhorrence of sin which slew Him, increase?

And this especially because we know that everything which He did, said, and suffered in this world, was to fill our hearts with this abhorrence. To slay sin He died; to nail its hands and feet He let His own be pierced. Why then wilt thou make vain for thyself all CHRIST'S toils and labours, by continuing in that bondage from which He delivered thee by His Blood? Why dost thou not tremble at the very name of sin, when thou seest GOD do such marvellous things to destroy it? What more

could be done to call back men from sin, than to set before them GOD hanging on a tree? Who would dare offend GOD, if he saw heaven and hell open before him? Yet to see GOD on the Cross is a far greater thing than this. Wherefore if any man is not moved by this great marvel I know not what can move him.

## CHAPTER V.

*Of the Fifth Cause that constrains us to Virtue, namely, the Benefit of our Justification.*

**B**UT what would the benefit of Redemption avail us, if it were not followed by that of Justification, whereby the virtue of that great benefit is applied to us? For as medicines do no good unless they are applied to the disease, so this heavenly Medicine would profit us nothing unless it were applied to us. And this office especially pertains to the HOLY GHOST, to Whom the sanctification of man is attributed; for He it is Who prevents the sinner by His Mercy, and when He has prevented calls him, and when He has called justifies him, and when He has justified guides him in a straight way by the paths of righteousness, and thus leads him to the end by the gift of perseverance, and afterwards gives him the crown of glory: for all these benefits are comprehended in this great benefit of Justification.

The first of these is calling and justification, whereby, through the power of the Divine SPIRIT, the chains and bonds of our sins are broken, the man is released from the dominion and tyranny of the devil, he rises from life to death, from a sinner he is made righteous, and from a child of wrath a child of GOD. And this could by no means be done save by the Help and Favour of GOD, as the SAVIOUR testifies, saying, "No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My FATHER." Giving us to understand that neither the free will of man, nor all the powers of human nature are sufficient to raise a man from sin to grace without the intervention of the

Arm of Divine Power. On these words S. Thomas says that as a stone naturally sinks downwards, and cannot rise up unless something out of itself raise it, so man by the corruption of his nature, if left to himself, is always dragged down by the desire and love of earthly things, but if he is to rise upward to the supernatural desire and love of heavenly things he needs Help and Power from Heaven. And this is a thing to be observed, and a thing to weep over, in order that man may know himself, and may understand the corruption of his nature, and the need that he has to ask continually for GOD'S Help and Assistance.

To consider the subject in this light, man cannot lift up himself from sin to grace, unless the Almighty Hand of GOD raises him. And who can tell the number of benefits that this benefit contains? For by this means sin is indeed banished from the soul, and sin is the cause of innumerable evils therein: how great then must be the good that casts out all these evils! And since the consideration of this benefit is a great incitement to gratitude and to the desire of virtue, I will declare in few words the great goods that this one good gift brings with it.

For, firstly, man is hereby reconciled with GOD, and restored to His friendship. For the first and greatest of all the evils that deadly sin does in a soul, is to make GOD its enemy: for as He is Infinite Goodness, His abhorrence of wickedness is infinite also. And so the Prophet says, "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor both the blood-thirsty and deceitful man." (Ps. v. 6.) This is the greatest of all evils in the world, and the cause of them all; as, on the contrary, GOD'S love for us is the best of all good things, and the cause of them all. Now from this great evil we are delivered by the benefit of justification, whereby we are reconciled to GOD, and of enemies are made friends, and not with an ordinary friendship but with one of the warmest possible affections, that of a FATHER to His children. And with good cause does the beloved Evangelist S. John dwell on this, saying, "Behold, what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD." (1 John iii. 1, 2.) "Beloved, now are we the sons of GOD." He is not content with saying that we "should be called," but adds that we are, that

poor distrustful human nature might know more clearly and more distinctly the bountifulness of Divine grace, and that this dignity is not only in name and in word, but in act and deed. And if it is so great an evil to be hated of GOD, what must it be to be in His grace : for, as the philosophers say, everything is more good in proportion as its opposite is evil, wherefore that must be supremely good which is opposed to the extremely evil, namely, the being abhorred by GOD. We think so much in this world to be in favour with a master, a father, a prince, a prelate, or a king, what must it be to be in favour with that Supreme Prince, that Sovereign FATHER, and most Exalted LORD, in comparison with Whom all dignities and principalities of the earth are as if they were not. And this favour is yet greater, because it is so graciously given ; for as before the benefit of creation man could do nothing to merit existence, seeing that he existed not ; so after he had fallen into sin he could do nothing that merited this great benefit, not because he was not, but because he was evil and displeasing to GOD.

Another benefit, in addition to this, is, that man is delivered from the condemnation to everlasting punishment due to him for his sins. For sin, as we said before, makes man an object of abhorrence to GOD, and no man can be abhorred of Him without most grievous hurt to himself ; and therefore the wicked, despising GOD and separating themselves from Him by their sins, deserve thereby to be despised and cast out from the sight and the companionship, and the most beautiful House of GOD. And because they separated themselves from GOD, and loved creatures inordinately, it is just that they should be tormented by them all, and condemned to everlasting torments, in comparison with which all those of this life are pictures rather than realities. (S. Mark ix.) And to these torments will be added the worm that shall not die (Isa. lxvi. 24), which will incessantly gnaw and tear the inmost parts and conscience of the wicked. (Eccles. vii.) And what shall I say of the companionship of all the evil spirits, and all the damned, and of that dismal dreary land of darkness and the shadow of death, where there is no order, no joy, no quiet, no peace, no rest, no satisfaction, no hope, but everlasting weeping, everlasting gnashing of teeth,



everlasting fury, and everlasting blasphemies and cursings. (Job x.) From all these great evils GOD delivers those whom He justifies ; for when they are reconciled to Him, and admitted into His Favour, they are free from His Wrath and from the punishments of His Vengeance.

Another and a more spiritual benefit is the renewal and reformation of the inner man, which was defiled and degraded by sin. For sin first deprives man, not only of GOD, but also of all supernatural strength, and of all the Gifts and Graces of the HOLY GHOST, wherewith he was adorned, armed, and enriched ; and when deprived of these Gifts and Graces, he is immediately wounded and crippled in the capacities and gifts of nature. For as man is a reasonable creature, and sin is a thing opposed to reason, and it is the nature of opposites to destroy each other, it follows that in proportion as sins are multiplied the powers of the soul are diminished, not in themselves, but in their capability of action. And thus sins make the soul miserable (S. John viii. 34), sickly, slothful, unstable in all that is good, and inclined to all evil ; weak in resisting temptations, and reluctant in walking in the way of GOD'S commandments. They deprive it also of true liberty and sovereignty of spirit, and make it a slave of the devil, the world, the flesh, and its own appetites ; and thus it lives in a far more wretched bondage than that of Babylon or Egypt. And, moreover, they dull and blunt all the spiritual senses of the soul, so that it neither hears the Voice and the Inspiration of GOD, nor sees the great evils that are prepared for it, nor perceives the sweet odour of the virtues and examples of the Saints, nor tastes how sweet the LORD is, nor feels the stripes and the benefits that incite it to His love. Nor is this all ; they destroy the peace and joy of the conscience, they quench the fervour of the spirit, and leave the man filthy, loathsome, and abominable in the sight of GOD and of His Saints.

From all these evils, then, we are delivered by this benefit. For GOD'S unfathomable Mercy is not content with forgiving our sins, and receiving us into His Grace, but it also banishes all the evils that sin brought with it, reforming and renewing the whole of our inner man. He heals our wounds, He washes our uncleanness, He breaks the bonds of our sins, He shakes

off the yoke of evil desires, He delivers us from bondage and slavery to the devil, He mitigates the fury of our evil inclinations, He restores the true freedom and beauty of the soul, He gives back to us the peace and joy of a good conscience, He quickens our inward senses, He makes us active in good, slow and reluctant to evil, strong and constant in resisting temptations, and thus He enriches us with good works. In short, He so renovates our inward man and all its powers, that the Apostle calls those who are justified, renewed, and new creatures. (Eph. iv. 23; Gal. vi. 15.) And this renewal is so entire that when made by baptism it is called regeneration (Titus iii. 5); when by repentance, resurrection; not only because it raises the soul from the death of sin to the life of grace, but also because it imitates in a manner the beauty of the resurrection to come. So true is this, that no tongue is able to declare the beauty of a justified soul, save only that Divine SPIRIT, who gives its beauty, and makes it His temple and His abode. For, if we would compare all the riches of the earth, all the honours of the world, all natural graces and all acquired virtues, with the beauty and riches of such a soul, all would appear most dark and vile beside it. For, as far as heaven surpasses earth, and the spirit the body, and eternity time, so far does the life of grace surpass that of nature, the beauty of the soul that of the body, inward riches those that are outward, and spiritual strength that of nature. For all these things are limited and temporal, and lovely only to the bodily eyes, and the general concurrence of GOD is sufficient for them; but for the others an especial and supernatural concurrence is needed, and they cannot be called temporal, because they lead us to eternity; nor altogether finite, since they obtain for us GOD, in Whose eyes they are so precious, and of so great worth, that He is enamoured of their beauty.

And though GOD might have done all these things solely by His assistance and by His will, it was His pleasure to do them by adorning the soul with all the infused virtues, and with the sevenfold gifts of the HOLY GHOST, whereby not only the essence of the soul, but also all its powers are clothed and adorned with heavenly attire.

And above all these benefits His infinite Goodness and Bounty adds another, the presence and indwelling of the HOLY GHOST, and of all the Most HOLY TRINITY, (S. John xiv. 16-23), Who come to dwell in the justified soul, and to teach it how to use all these possessions, even as a good father is not content with giving his possessions to his son, but gives him also a guardian and tutor, to teach him how to manage them. For even as in the soul that is in sin, as the SAVIOUR says in S. Matthew, there dwell vipers, dragons, and serpents, that is, a multitude of wicked spirits that make it their abode, (S. Matt. xii. 45 ; S. Luke xi. 26), so on the contrary into the justified soul enters the HOLY GHOST, and all the most HOLY TRINITY, Who banish all these monsters and infernal beings, and make it their temple and habitation, as the SAVIOUR expressly testified, saying, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." (S. John xiv. 23.) By virtue of which words all the holy Doctors confess, together with the Schoolmen, that the HOLY GHOST dwells in an especial manner in the justified soul ; distinguishing between the HOLY GHOST and His gifts, and declaring that not only the gifts of the HOLY GHOST are given, but also the HOLY GHOST Himself, Who enters into the soul, makes it His temple and dwelling-place, and for that purpose Himself cleanses and sanctifies it, and adorns it with His gifts, that it may be a dwelling worthy of such a Guest.

To all these benefits is added another and a marvellous one, that all who are justified are made living members of CHRIST, for before they were dead members, and received not His influences. And hence arise other great and new prerogatives and excellencies ; for hence it proceeds that the SON of GOD loves them as His members, and cares for them as for His own members, and takes diligent heed for them as for His members, and infuses into them continually His virtue as the Head into the members ; and finally the Everlasting FATHER looks upon them with eyes of love, for He looks upon them as living members of His Only-Begotten SON, united and incorporated with Him by participation of His SPIRIT, and

thus their works are acceptable and meritorious, because they are the works of living members of His SON, Who worketh in them all that is good. And from this dignity it follows that when they ask gifts of GOD, they ask them with very great confidence, because they know that they ask not so much for themselves as for the very SON of GOD Himself Who is honoured in them and with them. For as the good that is done to the members is done to the head, they know that having CHRIST for their Head, what they ask for themselves they ask for Him. For if it be true, as the Apostle says, that they who sin against the members of CHRIST sin against CHRIST, (1 Cor. vi. 15), and if CHRIST accounts Himself as persecuted, when His members are persecuted for His sake, as He said to the same Apostle when he persecuted the Church, (Acts ix. 4, 5), what marvel that when His members are honoured, CHRIST Himself is honoured in them. What confidence, then, ought a righteous man to have in his prayers, when he considers that in asking for himself he is in a manner asking gifts of the Everlasting FATHER for His most Loving SON. For we know that when a gift is given to one person for another's sake, it is chiefly given to him for whose sake it was bestowed, as those who serve the poor for love of GOD serve not so much the poor as GOD.

To all these benefits is added a final one, to which all the others lead, the right and claim to everlasting life that is given to all who are justified. For our Infinite GOD, Whose Justice and Mercy together shine so brightly, whilst He condemns all impenitent sinners to everlasting torments, accepts all true penitents to endless life. He might have forgiven our sins, and have admitted man to His grace and friendship, without raising us to a participation in His glory, but He was not satisfied with this, but whom He forgave, He also justified; and whom He justified, He also made sons; and whom He made sons He also made heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs of His own inheritance with His Only-begotten SON. (Rom. viii. 30, 17.) And hence arises the lively hope that gladdens them in all tribulations, with the assurance of this unspeakable treasure; for although they be surrounded with all the afflictions, infirmities, and miseries of this life, they know for certain "that the sufferings

of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." (Rom. viii. 18.) Nay, that their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

These benefits, then, are comprehended in that one unspeakable benefit, that act of justification, which S. Augustine, with good reason esteems above the creation of the world, for GOD created the world by a word, but to sanctify man He shed His Blood, and suffered such great and innumerable torments. If, then, we owe our GOD so much for our creation, how much more must we owe Him for our justification, for which our debt is greater as its cost is more.

And although no man can know with certainty that he is justified, he may have great grounds for conjecturing it. Not the least of these is a change of life, when he who once would readily commit a thousand deadly sins, now would not commit one for all the world. If it be thus with thee, how strongly art thou bound to the service of thy Sanctifier, Who has delivered thee from such great evils, and done thee such great good as I have now declared. Or if perchance thou art in a bad state, I know not what can more move thee to leave it than the consideration of those great evils which thou seest to proceed from sin, and of the many good things that accompany this incomparable benefit.

But the Benefits and the Workings of the HOLY GHOST end not here. That Divine SPIRIT is not contented with helping us to enter in at the gate of righteousness; He helps us after we have entered in to walk in its paths, till He brings us safe and sure over all the waves of the tempestuous sea to the haven of salvation. For when He enters into the soul that is justified, He does not abide there idle; He is not content with honouring that soul with His presence, but He also sanctifies it with His influence, working in it and with it all that is needful for its salvation. He abides in it, as a Father of a family in His house, governing it; as a Master in His school, teaching it; as a Gardener in His garden, cultivating it; as a King in His kingdom, ruling it; as the Sun in the world, enlightening it;

and as a Soul in the body, giving it life, sense, and motion : not however as form works on matter, but as a man rules his house. What can be more glorious and more desirable than to have within us such a Guest, such a Ruler, such a Guide, such a Companion, such a Guardian, such a Helper ! For He is All, and does all in the souls wherein He dwells. As a fire He enlightens our understanding, inflames our will, and lifts us up from earth to heaven. As a dove He makes us simple, meek, tractable, and loving to each other. As a cloud he shelters us from the ardours of the flesh, and tempers the fervour of our passions. And, lastly, as a mighty wind He moves and inclines our will to all that is good, and turns it away and disinclines it from all evil. Wherefore those that are justified come to abhor the vices that once they loved, and to love the virtues that they once abhorred, as is plainly declared to us in the person of holy King David, who tells us that he hates and abhors all lies, and that he has as great delight in GOD'S testimonies as in all manner of riches. (Ps. cxix.) And the reason of this was that the HOLY GHOST, as a kind mother, had made the breast of the world bitter as wormwood, and the commandments of GOD like the sweetest honey.

Thus it appears plainly that all things good and profitable for us are due to this Divine SPIRIT. For if we depart from evil, it is by Him that we depart ; and if we do good, we do it by Him ; and if we persevere therein, by Him we persevere ; and if we are rewarded for this good, it is He also that rewards us. Wherefore we see plainly what S. Augustine says, that when GOD pays for our services, He rewards His own benefits, and thus for one grace He gives us another grace, and for one gift another gift. The holy patriarch Joseph was not content with giving his brethren the corn which they came to buy in Egypt, but also commanded that the money which they brought to buy it should be restored into the mouth of their sacks. (Gen. xlii. 35.) Our LORD deals in like manner with His servants, for He gives them everlasting life, and likewise grace and a good life to buy it with. As Eusebius Emisenus well says, "Qui ideo colitur, ut misereatur ; jam misertus est, ut coleretur : " that is, " He Whom we worship, in

order that He may be merciful to us, has already been merciful, in causing us to worship Him."

Fix thine eyes, then, on thine own life, and look, as the same Doctor says, how many good things thou hast done, and from how many evil things, from how many falsehoods, how many adulteries, how many robberies, how many sacrileges the LORD has delivered thee; and see hereby how much thou owest Him. For, as S. Augustine says, it is not a less mercy that He has prevented these evils so that thou didst them not, than it would be to pardon them when done, but a much greater one. And so he says, in writing to a virgin, All sins which grace is given us not to commit, we must account as pardoned by Him Who gave us grace not to commit them; therefore love not little, as one to whom little has been forgiven; but rather love much, because much is given thee. For if he loves much to whom it was granted that he should not pay, how much more should he love, to whom it was given that he should possess! For he who from the beginning of his life perseveres in chastity, is ruled by Him; and he who from unclean becomes clean, is corrected by Him; and he who remains unclean to the end, is by Him justly forsaken. What remains then, but that we say with the Prophet, "O let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, that I may sing of Thy glory and honour all the day long!" (Ps. lxxi. 7.) On which words S. Augustine says again, "What means all the day long? Perpetually and unceasingly. In prosperity I will praise thee, O LORD, for Thou comfortest me; and in adversity, for Thou chastisest me; before I was, that Thou hast made me; and since I exist, that Thou hast given me being; when I have sinned, that Thou forgivest me; when I returned to Thee, that Thou hast helped me; and when I shall have persevered to the end of my life, that Thou hast crowned me. Therefore shall my mouth be filled with Thy praise, and I will sing of Thy glory all the day long.

And here there would be occasion to treat of the benefit of the Sacraments, which are the instruments of our justification, and especially of Holy Baptism, and of the light of faith and grace that is given us therein. But because I have treated of this matter in another place, I will say no more at present,

although it is impossible to be silent of that Grace of graces, and Sacrament of sacraments, whereby GOD has been pleased to dwell on earth with men, and to give Himself to them every day as medicine and as food. Once He was offered as a Sacrifice for us on the Cross; but here He renews the offering daily on the Altar for our sins. "This do," He said, "in remembrance of Me." (S. Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 25.) O saving Remembrance! O only Sacrifice, Acceptable Offering, Bread of Life, Sweetest Sustenance, Royal Food, Manna that contains all sweetness. (Wisd. xvi. 20, 21.) Who can praise Thee sufficiently! Who can worthily receive Thee! Who can venerate Thee with due reverence! My soul faints when I think of Thee, my tongue cannot speak of Thee, nor can I magnify Thy marvels as I desire. (Ps. cxix.)

And if the LORD had granted this benefit only to the pure and innocent it would have been an inestimable gift; but by the very fact that He vouchsafed to communicate Himself to these, He constrains Himself to pass through the hands of many wicked ministers, whose souls are the abode of Satan, whose bodies are vessels of corruption, and whose life is spent in sin and uncleanness. Yet to visit and console His friends, He consents to be handled by such men, to be handled by their filthy hands, received into their sacrilegious mouths, and buried in their loathsome bodies. Once only His Body was sold, but He is sold again thousands of times in this Sacrament; once He was mocked and despised in His Passion, but the wicked mock and despise Him a thousand times on the Altar; once He was placed between two thieves, and a thousand times He is given into the hands of sinners.

Wherewithal, then, shall we serve a Master who seeks our good in so many ways and manners? What shall we give Him for this marvellous sustenance? If servants serve their masters because they give them meat, if soldiers pass through fire and sword for the same reason, what do we owe to our Master for this Heavenly Food? And if GOD required so much gratitude for the manna which He sent from on high, which was corruptible food (Exod. xvi. 20), what will He require for this Food, which not only is Incorruptible, but also makes them incorruptible that receive It worthily? (S. John vi. 54.) And if the

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SON of GOD Himself gave thanks to His FATHER for a meal of barley-bread, what thanks ought men to give for this Bread of Life? (v. 11.) If we owe so much for that food which keeps us in a state of existence, how much more for that which preserves us in a good state of existence? For we praise not a horse as a horse, but as a fine horse; neither wine as wine, but as excellent wine; nor a man as a man, but as a good man. If, then, thou owest so much to Him who made thee a man, what dost thou owe Him for making thee a good man? If so much for the good things of the body, what for those of the soul? If so much for the gifts of nature, what for the gifts of grace? And lastly, if thou owest Him so much because He made thee a son of Adam, how much more because He made thee the son of GOD? (1 S. John iii. 1.) For it is certain, as Eusebius Emisenus says, that far better is the day wherein we are born to eternity than that wherein we are born to the perils of the world.

Behold then, Brother, a new claim, a new chain. Let this, together with the former ones, bind thy heart, and constrain thee more to virtue and to thy Master's service.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Of the Sixth Cause that constrains us to Virtue, namely, the inestimable Benefit of Divine Predestination.*

**T**HE sixth Benefit is that of Election, which belongs to those alone whom GOD has chosen from all eternity for everlasting life. For this benefit the Apostle gives thanks in his own name and in that of all the elect, writing to the Ephesians in these words : "Blessed be the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST : according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST to Himself." (Eph. i. 3-5.) This same benefit the royal Prophet magnifies, saying, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and receivest unto Thee ; he shall dwell in Thy Court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House." (Ps. lkv. 4.) This may indeed with good reason be called the Benefit of benefits, and the Grace of graces. It is the Grace of graces, because it is given before all merit by the mere bounty and liberality of GOD, Who, doing injury to none, but giving to every man what is sufficient for his salvation, extends to others the immensity of His Mercy, as a most liberal and absolute Master of His own possessions.

It is also the Benefit of benefits, not only because it is the greatest of benefits, but also because it is the cause of all the rest. For when a man has received this benefit of election to

Glory, the LORD provides him with all other benefits and means that are required to obtain it, as He Himself has testified by a Prophet, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," (Jer. xxxi. 3) ; that is, calling thee to My Grace, that thereby thou mayest attain to My Glory. But the Apostle signified this yet more clearly when he said, "For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of His SON, that He might be the First-born among brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called ; and whom He called, them He also justified ; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. viii. 29, 30.) The reason of this is, that as GOD disposes all things orderly and sweetly, when He thinks good to choose any one for His glory, in addition to that grace He gives him many other graces : for He provides him with all that is requisite for the attainment of that first grace. So that as a father who brings up his son to be a cleric, or a learned man, begins from his childhood to occupy him with Church matters or literary studies, and directs all the steps of his life to this end, so also this Eternal FATHER, having chosen a man for His glory, whereunto we are led by the path of righteousness, seeks always to lead him by that path, that so he may attain to his appointed end.

For this benefit, so great and of such long standing, thanks must be given to the LORD by all who perceive signs of it in themselves. For though this secret is hidden from the eyes of men, yet as there are signs of justification, so are there also of GOD's election. The chief of these is amendment of life, of their perseverance in a good life. For one who has lived for many years in the fear of GOD, with diligent care to avoid all deadly sin, may piously believe that, as the Apostle says, GOD will keep him without sin to the end for the day of His coming, and will finish in him that which He hath begun. (Phil. i. 6 ; 1 Cor. i. 8.)

It is true that no man is to account himself secure, as we see by the example of Solomon, who, after living well so long, was deceived at the end of his life. (1 Kings xi.) But these are especial exceptions to the general rule, which is, as the Apostle says, (1 Cor. iii.,) and as Solomon teaches us in his Proverbs, say-

ing, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.) So that he who was virtuous in his youth, will be so in his old age. With these signs then, and others noted by the Saints, a man may humbly presume of the infinite Goodness of GOD that He has put him in the number of His elect. And as he hopes in the Mercy of the LORD that he will be saved, so he may humbly presume that he is of the number of those who are to be saved, for one implies the other.

How greatly, then, is a man bound to serve GOD by this great benefit, the being written in that book whereof the LORD said to His Apostles, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (S. Luke x. 20.) How great a benefit to have been loved and chosen from all eternity, ever since GOD is GOD, to have had a home in His loving Bosom from the years of eternity, to have been chosen for the adopted son of GOD, when the Eternal SON of GOD was begotten among the glories of the Saints, who were present to the Divine understanding. (Ps. cx. 3.)

Consider next attentively all the circumstances of this Divine Election, and thou wilt see that each one is itself a new benefit, and a new obligation. Consider how worthy is the Elector Who chose thee, GOD Himself, Infinite in riches and in blessedness, Who had no need of thee or of any one. See how unworthy in himself was the chosen, a miserable mortal creature, subject to all the poverties, infirmities, and miseries of this life, and justly condemned to the everlasting torments of the next for his crimes. Consider also how exalted is this election, for thou art chosen to so great a dignity, that there can be none greater, to be a son of GOD, an heir of His kingdom, a sharer in His glory. Consider also how free and gracious was this election, for it was, as we have said, before all desert, of the mere good pleasure of the Divine will, and as the Apostle says, "to the praise of the glory of His grace," (Eph. i. 6); for the more free and gracious the benefit, the more is the receiver obliged. Consider also how ancient is this election, for it began not with the world, but is older than the world, as old as GOD, Who, as He is from all eternity, so from all eternity has loved His elect, has had

and has them before Him, and looks on them with fatherly and loving eyes, being always resolved to grant them this great good. Consider also how singular is this gift, for amidst such an infinite number of barbarous nations, and reprobates, He was pleased to give this happy lot in the number of His elect to thee, and therefore He separated and divided thee from the mass of human nature damaged by sin, and made that the bread of angels which was but the leaven of corruption. On this subject little can be written, but much felt and considered, that thou mayest know how to thank the LORD for this singular benefit, the greater because the number of the elect is so small, and that of the lost so great, for Solomon tells us that they are innumerable. (Eccles. i.) And if none of these things move thee, be moved at least by the great sacrifice that this Supreme Elector was pleased to make for this object, when He spent on it the Life and the Blood of His Only-begotten SON, whom He determined from all eternity to send into the world as the Executor of this His Divine determination.

Now since all these things are so, what time will suffice to think of all these mercies? what tongue to declare them? what heart to feel them? what services to repay them? With what love must a man reply to this eternal Love of GOD? Will any wait till old age to love Him Who loved him from eternity? Will any change this Friend for any friend beside? For if Divine Scripture highly praises an old friend, (Ecclus. ix. 10; Prov. xxvii. 10), how much more an Eternal One! And if an old friend is not to be changed for a new, who would change the possession and the favour of this Ancient Lover for all the friends in the world? And if possession from time immemorial gives a title to property, what title will possession from all eternity give to Him Who claims us by right of this love, that so we may account ourselves His!

What good things are there in the world that we would not exchange for this good! What evils that we would not gladly suffer for it! Who is there so soulless, but if he knew by revelation from GOD that some poor beggar passing through the street was thus predestinated, would not kiss the earth he trod upon! He would follow him, and fall on his knees,

and give him a thousand blessings, and say, "O happy man! O blessed man! Is it possible that thou art of the joyful number of the elect! Is it possible that thou art to see the face of GOD in His Glory! that thou art to be the companion and brother of all the elect! that thou art to be among the companies of Angels! that thou art to rejoice in that heavenly music! that thou art to reign for ever and ever! that thou art to see the glorious countenance of CHRIST and that of His most holy Mother! O blessed was the day when thou wert born, more blessed far that when thou wilt die, because then thou wilt live for ever! Blessed the bread that thou eatest, blessed the earth whereon thou treadest, that bears on it so priceless a treasure, and far more blessed the afflictions that thou sufferest, and the wants that thou endurest, for they open a path for thee to the repose of eternity! What cloud can be so gloomy, what trouble so heavy, that it will not be dispersed by the sure evidence of this hope!"

With such eyes then we should look on one of the predestined if we knew him as he is. When a prince, the heir of a great kingdom, passes through the street, everybody comes out to look, admiring the happy lot, as the world thinks it, that has fallen on this youth, in being born the heir of a great kingdom. How far more admirable is this blessed lot that a man is born, chosen before all power of meriting, not to be a temporal king on earth, but to reign eternally in heaven.

Hereby then, Brother, thou mayest see how deeply indebted the LORD'S elect are for this great benefit, from which no man ought to account himself shut out, who will do his own part. Let every man give diligence, as S. Peter says, (2 S. Peter i. 10), to make his calling and election sure by good works, for we know assuredly that all who do them will be saved, and we know also that the grace of GOD never has failed any man, nor will ever fail. And firmly convinced of these two truths, let us continue our good works, and so we shall be of this glorious number.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Of the Seventh Cause that constrains Men to Virtue, which is the First of the Four Last Things, namely, Death.*

ANY one of the things above-mentioned would be a sufficient reason why man should devote himself wholly to the service of a Master to Whom he is bound by so many and so great reasons. But because most men are more moved by the interest of gain than by the motive of right, we will go on to speak of the great advantages, both present and future, promised to virtue ; and first of the two greatest of them, the glory that is given it, and the punishment that is avoided. These are the best oars for this voyage, the best spurs for this journey. Wherefore the blessed S. Francis in his rule, and our father S. Dominic in his, both in the same spirit and in the same words, command their preachers to discourse only of virtues and vices, of punishment and glory : the one to teach us how to live well, the other to make us to desire it. It is also a common saying of philosophers that the two weights that keep the clock of human life going are reward and punishment. For so great is our misery that none like virtue bare, if she comes unarmed with punishment, and unaccompanied by reward. And because no punishment or reward can be greater than endless torment or glory everlasting, we will treat here of these two things, to which we will add two others which precede them, death and the universal judgment, for each of these, well considered, helps us greatly to love virtue and to abhor vice, according to the words of the Wise Man, " Remember the end, and thou shalt never do

amiss." (Ecclus. vii. 36.) And by the end we understand the four things named above, of which we are now about to treat.

To begin, then, with the first, which is Death. This has the more power to move us because it is certain, daily, common. Especially, if we consider the particular judgment that will then be made on our life, which will not be changed at the last day : for as it is with us then so it will be for ever. But how strict this judgment will be, and what an account will be required of us! I do not desire that you should believe on my word, but from a history which S. John Climacus relates as an eye-witness, and which undoubtedly is one of the most fearful that I have ever read. He writes that in a certain monastery in his days there was a monk of careless life, who being at the point of death, was carried away in spirit for a great space of time, during which he saw the terrible severity and rigour of this particular judgment. And when afterwards by an especial dispensation of GOD he obtained space for penitence, he besought all the monks who were present to leave his cell, and closing up the door with stones and clay, he abode there to the day of his death, a space of twelve years, never going out, never speaking a word to any, and never taking any food during the whole time, save bread and water. But he sat in his cell, as one amazed, revolving in his heart the things that he had seen in that trance. And his thoughts were so fixed on them that he looked constantly in one direction, never turning his head aside, and continually shedding burning tears, which ran in streams from his eyes. And when the hour of his death was come, we broke open the door, which was built up as I have said, and all the monks of that desert entered into the cell, beseeching him with all humility to speak some edifying words to us, and he said no more than this, "I tell you of a truth, Fathers, that if men understood how terrible is this last moment and the judgment made at death, they would be very far from offending GOD." These are the words of S. John Climacus, who was present, and testifies to what he saw. So that there is no room for doubt concerning the fact, incredible as it may appear, since the witness is so faithful ; and there is great occasion for fear when we consider the life that this saint lived, and still more



the greatness of the vision that he saw, and which occasioned him to live that life. And this sufficiently declares the truth of the wise man's words, "Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss." (Ecclus. vii. 36.) Since this consideration is so great a safeguard against sin, let us now go through it shortly in all its parts, that we may obtain this great good.

Remember then now, my Brother, that thou art a Christian, and that thou art a man. Because thou art a man, thou knowest assuredly that thou art to die, and because thou art a Christian, thou knowest also that thou hast to give an account of thy life immediately after death. The faith that we profess suffers us not to doubt one, nor the experience of what we see the other. No man can avoid this blow, whether he be rich or poor. A day will come when thou wilt see the morning but not the night, or thou wilt see the night but not the morning. A day will come, thou knowest not when, perchance to-day or to-morrow, when thou thyself who art now reading this book, sound and well in all thy limbs and senses, measuring the days of thy life according to thy business and thy desires, wilt find thyself for the last time in thy chamber, awaiting the stroke of death, and the sentence spoken on the whole human race, from which there is no appeal or supplication. Consider, first, how uncertain this hour is, for it ordinarily comes when a man is most careless, making reckonings and forming plans for the future. (S. Luke xii. 20.) And therefore it is said that it comes "as a thief," (1 Pet. v. 10), for the thief comes when men are asleep and secure. Before death comes the grievous sickness that is to cause it, with all its circumstances, pain, loathing, sadness, medicine, weariness, long nights, which will wear us, and seem as a road and a preparation for death. For as those who seek to take a castle by force, first batter it violently till the walls are shaken and at last overthrown, and then immediately it is entered and conquered; so death is usually preceded by a very grievous sickness, which so batters unceasingly night and day at our natural forces, and the chief members of our body, that the soul, unable any longer to defend or preserve itself therein, forsakes them and departs.

But when the sickness has gone further, and we know the

truth, by its progress, or by the physician's words, and the hope of life is taken from us, what anguish seizes us then ! For then we see before us our departure from this life, and our separation from all things that we loved in it—children, wife, friends, relations, possessions, honours, titles, and offices, which end with life itself. And now follow the last troubles that accompany death, which are even worse than the preceding. The feet are dead, the nostrils are pinched, the tongue is unable to fulfil its office ; and as the departure takes place, all the members and senses begin to be troubled. Thus at his departure from life a man pays for the pain that accompanied his entrance into it, for at his death he suffers the pain which his mother felt at his birth. The entrance and the departure are in harmony, for both are with pain, pain of another or of himself.

Now comes before thee the agony of death, the end of life, the darkness of the tomb, the fate of the body, which is to be the food of worms, and far more that of the soul, which is now within thy body, and in a few hours will be thou knowest not where. It seems to thee that thou art already before the judgment seat of GOD, and that all thy sins are accusing thee, and crying out against thee. Now thou wilt see plainly how great was the sin that thou didst so easily commit, and thou wilt curse again and again the day wherein thou sinnest, and the pleasures that made thee sin. Now thou wilt be overflowing with wonder at thyself, seeing that for such trifling things as those that thou hast loved inordinately, thou hast incurred the risk of suffering such great agonies as now begin to come upon thee ; for now that the pleasures are past and judgment at hand, that which was little in itself and which has ceased to be, appears nothing, and that which in itself is great, and is now present, appears more plainly as it is. Now seeing that for such empty things thou art going to lose so great a good, now that looking on every side thou seest thyself everywhere surrounded and harassed, no more time remaining to thee for life, nor space for penitence, the course of thy days ended, and the friends and the idols that thou hast worshipped availing thee no more, (nay, the very things that thou hast loved and prized the most, will now torment thee most,) tell me, I pray thee, when thou art in this

strait, what wilt thou feel? whither wilt thou go? what wilt thou do? on whom wilt thou call? To turn back is impossible, to go on is intolerable, to remain where thou art is not permitted, what then wilt thou do? Then, says GOD by the Prophet to the wicked, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and the end thereof as a bitter day." (Amos viii. 9, 10.) What terrible words are these! "I will cause the sun," He says, "to go down at noon," for the wicked looking in that hour upon the multitude of their sins, and seeing that the Justice of GOD already begins to cut off their life, often fall into so great fear and terror, that they think themselves already reprobate and cast out from the mercy of GOD. And though it is still noon, that is, they are still in this life, which is the time for grace and mercy, it seems to them that the time is over, and everything barred against them. Mighty is the passion of fear, it makes little things great, and things absent it makes present. And if a trifling fear does this at times, what will the fear of such true and real danger do! They are still in this life among their friends, and they seem already to feel the pains of the lost. They seem at once both alive and dead, grieving for present things which they must leave, suffering already future things which they presage. They think those happy whom they leave on earth, and this envy increases their sorrow. Then does "the sun go down at noon," for whithersoever they turn their eyes, the way to heaven appears closed, and they can perceive no ray of light. If they look to the mercy of GOD, they think that they have forfeited it; if to His justice, it appears ready to fall on their head, and they see their day past, and the day of GOD coming. If they look on their past life, almost the whole of it accuses them; if on the present time they see themselves dying; if a little further on, they behold the Judge awaiting them. Amid so many objects and causes of fear, what shall they do, whither shall they go?

It goes on, "I will darken the earth in the clear day." This means that the things which caused most joy before, now cause most grief. A joyful thing is the sight of his children, of his friends, of his house and property, and of all that he loves, to a

living man. But now this light is to be darkened, for all these things will cause the greatest anguish, and will be the most cruel tormentors of those who love them. For as the possession and presence of the things that we love gives joy, so does the loss and separation from them naturally give pain. And therefore the sweet children are taken out of the presence of the dying father, and the good wife hides herself, that she may not give and receive such cruel pain by her presence. And because the journey is so far and the leave-taking for so long a distance, sorrow suffers us not to keep the rules of good breeding, nor permits the departing man to say to his friends, Farewell. If thou hast come as far as this, thou wilt see that I speak truly : but if thou hast not gone so far, believe those who have, for, as the Wise Man says, "They that sail on the sea tell of the danger thereof." (Ecclus. xliii. 24.)

And if such things pass before thy departure, what will pass after it? If the eve and vigil be such, what will be the festival and the day? For immediately after death follows the account and reckoning of the Divine Judgment, and how fearful that is, ask not of men of the world, who, as they live in Egypt, that is in darkness, live also in intolerable errors and blindness, but ask of the saints who live in the land of Goshen, where the light of truth always shines, (Exod. x. 22, 23), and they will tell thee, not by words but by deeds, how greatly this account is to be feared. For David was holy, and yet so greatly did he fear this account that he prayed to GOD, saying, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) And Arsenius was holy too, and when he was about to die, surrounded by his disciples, he began to be so greatly afraid, that his disciples perceived it, and said, "Father, dost thou now fear?" To whom the holy man replied, "Children, this fear is no new thing, for I always lived in it." And it is written of the blessed Agathon that he had the same fear; and when he was asked why he feared, after living in such innocence, replied, because the judgment of GOD was very different from that of men. No less fearful is that which S. John Climacus, a very holy man, relates of another holy monk, which, as it is very remarkable, I will repeat in his own words : "A monk

named Stephen," he says, "who dwelt in this place, greatly desired a quiet and solitary life, and after having exercised himself many years in the labours of the monastic life, and obtained the grace of tears and fasting, with many other distinguished virtues, he built a cell at the foot of the mountain where Elijah saw the sacred vision. This father, who lived so religious a life, desiring still greater strictness and more rigorous penance, went thence to another place called Sidey, which belonged to the Anchorites, who live in solitude. And after he had lived thus with the greatest severity, for the place was away from all human companionship, and sixty miles from any town, he came from thence at the end of his life, desiring to dwell in his former cell on that sacred mountain. He had there two very religious disciples, natives of Palestine, who took care of that cell. And when he had lived there a few days, he fell into a sickness of which he died. One day before his death he suddenly appeared in great amazement, and with his eyes wide open, he looked on one side of his bed, and on the other, as if some stood there asking an account of him, and he answered in the presence of all that were there, saying at one time, 'Yes, truly, but for that I fasted so many years.' Another time he said, 'It is not so, thou liest, I did no such thing.' Another time, 'It is true, but I wept, and served my neighbour so many times for it.' And another time he said, 'Thou speakest truly, it is so, I have nothing to say, but that with GOD there is mercy.' It was indeed a horrible and fearful sight to behold that invisible and strict judgment. Miserable that I am! What will become of me, if that great lover of solitude and quietness, had nothing to answer concerning some of his sins, he who had been a monk forty years, and had obtained the grace of tears! Some indeed affirmed that when this father was in the desert, a leopard ate from his hand. And when such a man as this departed, so strict an account was required of him, and we are left uncertain what was the judgment, the decree, and the sentence upon him." So far are the words of S. John Climacus, which plainly declare how greatly the careless and negligent ought to fear this instant, since such great saints were so sorely tried in it.

If thou wouldst ask why the saints so greatly feared at this

time, S. Gregory answers in his Book of the Morals, saying, "Holy men, considering attentively how just the Judge is Who is to call them to account, have ever before their eyes the end of their life, and carefully examine what they have to answer to the Judge in this inquiry. And if perchance they find themselves free from all bad works that they might have done, they fear lest they be guilty of evil thoughts which present themselves at every moment to the heart of man. For although it is an easy thing to overcome the temptation to evil deeds, it is not easy to defend ourselves against the continual attacks of evil thoughts. They always indeed fear the secret Judgment of this most Righteous Judge ; but then most especially do they dread them when they are about to pay the common debt of human nature, and see themselves approaching the Judge's presence. And this fear increases yet more, when the soul is about to leave the body, for then the vain thoughts and fancies of the imagination cease, and nothing of this world appears to him who is already nearly out of it. Thus the dying see nothing but themselves and GOD in Whose presence they find themselves, and forget all things besides. And if in this extremity they remember that they never failed to do those good things that they knew, they still fear that they have left undone those that they knew not, because they cannot judge or know themselves perfectly. And therefore, at the hour of departure, they are harassed by greater and more secret fears, because they know that in a very little space they will find that which will remain unchanged for ever." Thus far are the words of S. Gregory, and they show us how much more terrible this instant is than worldly men imagine.

Now if this judgment be so severe, and if the saints so greatly feared it, what should they do who are not saints? they who have spent the greater part of their life in vanities? they who have so often despised GOD? they who have lived in such forgetfulness of their salvation, and who have taken so little care to prepare themselves against this hour? If the righteous fear so much, what must the sinner do? What will the reed of the desert do when the cedar of Lebanon trembles? And if, as S. Peter says, "the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and

the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 18.) What wilt thou feel at that hour, when thou hast left this life and art entering alone, poor and naked, into that Divine Judgment, with no advocate but thy works, no companion but thine own conscience? And this before so strict a tribunal, and where the question is not of losing temporal life, but of everlasting life or death. And if in the reckoning of that day thou hast not wherewithal to pay, what will be the terror of thy heart! How confounded wilt thou be! How repentant! Great was the terror of the princes of Judah when they saw the victorious sword of Shishak, King of Egypt, fly through the streets of Jerusalem, (1 Kings xiv. 25, 26), when by the pain of present punishment they knew the guilt of their past offences. (2 Chron. xii. 6.) But what is this compared with the shame and terror that the wicked will feel now. What shall they do? Whither shall they go? How shall they defend themselves? Tears avail not now; repentance profits not now; prayers are heard no more; promises are no more accepted; time for repentance no longer given, for the last instant of life is ended, and there is no more time for repentance. Riches, family, favour of the world, far less will they avail; for, as the Wise Man says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death." (Prov. xi. 4.) When the wretched soul sees itself surrounded by such misery, what can it do but say with the prophet, "The snares of death compassed me round about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." (Ps. cxvi. 3.) Miserable that I am, how straitly am I now besieged by my sin! How has this hour come upon me suddenly like a thief! How unthought of has it arrived! What avail me now all my past honours and dignities! What do my friends and servants profit me! What all the wealth and riches that I possessed! For now I must content myself with seven feet of earth, and with a linen shroud. And what is worse, the riches will remain here to be squandered by others, and the sins that I committed in gaining them wrongfully, will go with me beyond the grave, where I must pay for them. What avail me now all my past pleasures and delights, for the pleasures are ended, and there remains only the dregs, the scruples and remorse of conscience, the thorns that pierce my heart, and that will torture it for ever.

Why did I not prepare for this hour ! How often was I warned and would not hear ! “How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me ! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.” (Prov. v. 12-14.)

Such will be the affliction, the anxiety, the considerations of the wicked at this hour. That thou mayest not come to such distress, my Brother, I beseech thee, of all that I have now said to consider and fix three points in thy memory. First, consider how great will be the pain thou must endure at the hour of death for all the offences thou hast committed against GOD. Secondly, how greatly thou wilt then desire to have loved and served Him, so that He might be favourable to thee now. Thirdly, what manner of repentance thou wouldst then desire to practise, if time were given thee. So mayest thou strive to live now as thou wouldst then desire to have lived.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*Of the Eighth Clause that constrains us to Virtue, which is the Second of the Four Last Things, namely, the Last Judgment.*

**A**FTER death follows the particular judgment of each individual, and after this, the general judgment of all, when the Apostle's words will be fulfilled, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 10.) And because I have treated of that judgment, and of the signs that are to precede it, in the Memorial of a Christian Life, I will now speak only of the strictness of the account required in it, and of that which will follow after, to show thee how greatly thou art bound to virtue.

The first is so remarkable, that one of the things at which holy Job most marvelled, was that man being so trifling and so ill-inclined a creature, GOD, Who is so great, should be so severe towards him, that there is no word, no thought, no unregulated emotion but He writes it in His Book, and will demand an exact account of it. And thus he speaks at length, saying, "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thine enemy? Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt Thou pursue the dry stubble? For Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. Thou putttest my feet also in the stocks, (fettering my appetite with the law of Thy commandments) and lookest narrowly into all my paths; Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten,

(Job xiii. 24-28.) And continuing the same subject, he adds immediately after, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost Thou open Thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with Thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Job xiv. 1-4.) All these words holy Job spake, greatly marvelling at the severity of the Divine justice towards a creature so frail, so evil-inclined, and who so easily drinketh iniquity like water. For if this rigour had been towards the Angels, who are spiritual and very perfect creatures, it would not have been so marvellous ; but for man, whose evil inclinations are innumerable, that the account of his life should be so exact, that not one idle word, or one instant of ill-spent time shall be passed over, this is a thing that surpasses all astonishment. Who but must be terrified by the SAVIOUR'S words, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (S. Matt. xii. 36.) Now, if an account will be required of these words which do no one any harm, how will it be as to unclean words, and filthy thoughts, and bloody hands, and adulterous eyes, and a whole life spent in evil? And if this be true, as it is, what can we say of the strictness of this judgment, that is not less than the fact? How overwhelmed will a man be when, in the presence of so great an assembly, a little word that he spoke one day thoughtlessly is laid to his charge! Who but must be amazed at such a demand as this? Or who would dare say this, unless GOD had said it? Did any king ever ask account of one of his servants of the point of a needle? O exalted Christian religion, how great is the purity that thou commandest, how strict the account that thou requirest, how severe the judgment that thou passest!

And how great will be the shame of the wicked, when all the evil deeds that were hidden within the walls of their houses, all their unclean doings from their earliest years, all the corners and hidden things of their consciences, shall be published openly before the whole world! Whose conscience will be so pure that he will not now begin to change colour, and to dread this

shame! For if it be so shameful a thing to tell one's sins to a confessor in the secrecy of the confessional that some men hide and conceal them, what will be the shame in the presence of GOD, and of all ages present, past, and to come? So great will be this shame that the Prophet tells us, "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." (Hosea x. 8.) Swallow us up in the deep that we may no more appear in such great shame and confusion.

And what will it be beyond all this to await the thunderstroke of the final sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (S. Matt. xxv. 41.) What will the reprobate feel at these words? "How little a portion is heard of Him?" saith holy Job, "but the thunder of His power who can withstand?" (Job xxvi. 14, Vulg.) So terrible, so powerful will this word be, that the earth will open, and they will in a moment go down to the abyss, who, as Job again says, "take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ," and who "spend their days in wealth." (Job xxi. 12, 13.) S. John speaks thus of their fall in the Apocalypse: "I saw another Angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Rev. xviii. 1, 2.) And the holy Evangelist adds and says that the Angel "took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." (Rev. xviii. 21.) In this manner, then, shall the wicked fall down that precipice, into that dungeon of darkness and confusion, which is here meant by Babylon.

But what tongue can express the multitude of pains that will be suffered there! There their bodies will burn with living fire that shall never be quenched. There their souls will be consumed and tortured with the gnawing worm of conscience that will never die or cease. (Isa. lxvi. 24; S. Mark ix. 43, 46, 48; Eccclus. vii. 17.) There will be the perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth, of which Holy Scripture so often warns us.

(S. Matt. viii. 12, xiii. 50, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51, xxv. 30 ; S. Luke xiii. 28.) There will the condemned in cruel rage and despair turn their fury against GOD and themselves, gnawing their flesh with their mouths, bursting themselves with sighs, breaking their teeth with gnashing, furiously tearing themselves with their nails, and everlastingly blaspheming against the Judge Who sentenced them to such punishment. There will each one curse his wretched fate and his unhappy birth, continually repeating the sad lamentations and words of Job, though with a very different heart, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkness ; let not GOD regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it ; let a cloud dwell upon it ; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it ; let it not be joined unto the days of the year ; let it not come into the number of the months. Why died I not from the womb ? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly ? Why did the knees prevent me ? Or why the breasts that I should suck ?" (Job iii. 3-6, 11, 12.) This will be the music there, the songs there, the matins that the lost will sing for ever. O wretched tongues, that will speak no word save blasphemy ! O miserable ears, that will hear no sound but groans ! O unhappy eyes, that will see nothing but agonies ! O tortured bodies, that will have no refreshment but flames ! How will it be now with them that passed their whole life in pastimes and delights ! O how short an enjoyment has produced so long a train of miseries ! O fools and miserable ! What avail you now all those pastimes that you enjoyed so short a time, since now you are to weep eternally ? What has become of your riches ? Where are your treasures ? (Wisd. v. 8, 9.) Where your joys and delights ? The seven years of plenty are passed, and the seven years of famine are come, and have devoured all the abundance of the good ones, so that there remains no sign or remembrance of it. (Gen. xlv. 29, 30.) Your glory has perished, your happiness is swallowed up in this ocean of sorrow. You have come to such necessity that not one single drop of water is given you to temper the raging thirst

that torments you. (S. Luke xvi. 25, Vulgate.) And not only your past prosperity will profit you nothing, but it is one of the things that will most cruelly torment you. For the words of Job will be fulfilled, "The worm shall feed sweetly on him." (Job xxiv. 20.) When, as S. Gregory declares, the memory of past delights shall make the bitterness of present pains more sensible, for they will remember what once they were, and what now they are, and how for what ended so soon they suffer now unendingly. Then will they clearly see the deceitfulness of the enemy; and coming to their senses, though too late, they will begin to say the words of the Book of Wisdom, "We fools have erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined upon us, and the Sun of Righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction; yea, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way: but as for the way of the LORD, we have not known it." (Wisd. v. 4, 6, 7.) These will be the lamentations, the repentance, the perpetual sorrow of the lost, which will avail them nothing, for the time is past.

These things well considered are a great stimulus and incitement to virtue; and S. Chrysostom often makes use of them for this purpose in many passages of his Homilies, where he speaks thus, "That thou mayest labour to make thy soul the temple and dwelling-place of GOD, (2 Cor. v. 1-4,) remember that terrible and fearful day when we must all stand before the Judgment-seat of CHRIST, to give account for all our works."

Consider next the manner in which our LORD comes to judge the quick and dead. Look how many thousands of Angels accompany Him, and account that thy ears already hear the sound of that terrible voice of CHRIST that will sentence the world. See how after this sentence some are cast into outer darkness; others rejected from the gates of heaven, after the great labour of their virginity; others are bound in bundles as tares, and cast into the fire; and others are given over to the worm that dieth not, and to perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth. Seeing that these things are so, shall we not now cry out with the Prophet, and say, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and

night!" (Jer. ix. 1.) Come now then, Brethren, while it is time, and let us prevent our Judge by the confession of our offences, for it is written, "Who will give Thee thanks in the pit?" (Ps. vi. 5.)

Consider attentively that our LORD has given us two eyes, two ears, two feet, and two hands, so that if we lose one of those members we can make use of the other; but He has given us but one soul. If that, then, is condemned, wherewithal shall we live the life of immortality and glory? Let us therefore be extremely careful of it, seeing that, accompanied by the body, it has to be condemned or acquitted, and that it must appear before the Judgment-seat of CHRIST, where, if thou seekest to excuse thyself by saying that money deceived thee, the Judge will reply, that He had warned thee, saying, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (S. Matt. xvi. 26; S. Mark viii. 36; S. Luke ix. 25.) If thou sayest, "The devil deceived me," He will tell thee that it availed Eve nothing when she said, "The serpent beguiled me." (Gen. iii. 13.)

Read the Sacred Scriptures, and mark how the Prophet Jeremiah saw first "a rod of an almond tree," (Jer. i. 11-13,) and afterwards "a great seething pot," set upon the coals, which gives us to understand how GOD deals with man, threatening first, and afterwards chastising. For whoso refuses to receive correction from the threatening rod, shall suffer torment from the seething pot. Read also the Scriptures of the Gospel, and thou wilt see that no one helped those whom the LORD condemned: no brother helped his brother, no friend his friend, no child his father, and no father his child. But why do I speak of these, who were sinful men, when even Noah, Daniel, and Job would have no power to change the Judge's sentence. (Ezek. xiv. 14.) Observe, the man who was cast out from the wedding feast, how no man spake a word for him. (S. Matt. xxii. 13.) Look how there was none to intercede for the servant who received his master's talent, and did not trade therewith. (S. Matt. xxv. 30.) Mark also the five virgins against whom the door of heaven was shut, and for whom none pleaded, (S. Matt. xxv. 10,) whom CHRIST calls "foolish," who despised

the pleasures of the flesh, and quenched the fire of concupiscence, and yet at last were accounted foolish, because, having kept the great counsel of virginity, they failed to keep the little command of humility, being puffed up with the glory of their virgin life. Thou hast heard also of the rich man who had no compassion on Lazarus, how, burning in the place of vengeance, he asked for but one drop of water, and the holy patriarch would not mitigate his torments with this trifling relief. (S. Luke xvi. 25.) Since this is so, shall we not now charitably help one another? Shall we not give glory to GOD, before the Sun of Righteousness has set to us, and our day is ended? Better is it to have the tongue dried up a little here by fasting, than to indulge and satisfy it, and then desire one drop of water, and not obtain it. And if we are so tender that we can hardly endure a three days' fever, how shall we bear the everlasting fires? If we dread a sentence of death from an earthly judge who takes away forty or fifty years of life, shall we not fear the sentence of that Judge who deprives us of life everlasting? We are terrified when we behold the punishments inflicted in this world on malefactors, or when we read of executioners forcing them along, scourging them, disjointing, dismembering, tearing them in pieces, burning them with plates of red-hot metal. But these things are but a jest and a shadow in comparison with the torments of the next life! For they all end when life ends; but there the worm dieth not, the life endeth not, the tormentor wearies not, and the flame is never quenched. So that every thing that thou wouldst compare with these torments—fire, sword, beasts, or any torture whatever—is but a dream and a shadow beside them.

And the castaways, who have lost all this good and incurred all this evil, what will they do? What will they say? How will they accuse themselves? How will they mourn and sigh? And all in vain. For sailors are of no use when the ship has gone down; physicians are of no use when life is ended. Now too late will they perceive their errors; now will they say, "This or that ought we to have done, and truly we were often warned of it, and it was in vain." Then will the Jews know Him Who came in the Name of the LORD; but the knowledge

will profit them nothing, because they knew Him not in time. But what plea can we make, wretched that we are, in that day when heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, days and nights, and all the whole world are crying out against us, and bearing witness of our misdeeds? And when, if all other things were silent, our own conscience would rise up against us, and accuse us. Almost all these are the words of S. Chrysostom, and they show us how greatly a man ought to fear that day, if his accounts are not in order. And so S. Ambrose felt, though so well prepared, for, writing on S. Luke, he speaks thus : "Woe unto me, if I have not wept for my sins! Woe unto me, if I do not arise at midnight, O LORD, to praise Thy holy Name! Woe unto me, if I deceive my neighbour! or if I do not speak the truth! For now is the axe laid to the root of the tree. Therefore let all strive to bring forth fruits of grace, if they are able; or, if not, of penitence. For the LORD is at hand. He comes seeking fruit. He will give life to the faithful labourers, and will condemn the unfruitful and neglectful."



## CHAPTER IX.

*Of the Ninth Obligation that binds us to Virtue, which is the Third of the Four Last Things, namely, Heavenly Glory.*

ANY one of the things above-mentioned should be enough to incline our hearts to the love of virtue. But because the frowardness of the human heart is so great, that all these things often fail to overcome it, I will now add another motive no less efficacious than the former, and that is the greatness of the reward that is promised to virtue, which is, Heavenly Glory. And here there are two things especially to be considered; first, the beauty and excellence of the place, the very Heaven of heavens; secondly, the beauty and the excellence of the King Who dwells therein with all His chosen ones.

Now as to the first: how great is the beauty and the splendour of the place no mortal tongue can tell! Yet there are signs whereby we may dimly discern and conjecture somewhat thereof. The first is the end for which it was made, for that is one of the circumstances that most declare the nature and excellence of a thing. The end then for which our LORD prepared and built up this place was for the manifestation of His glory. The LORD hath indeed "made all things for Himself," (Prov. xvi. 4,) as Solomon tells us, but Heaven is more especially said to be created for this end, because His greatness and magnificence especially shine forth therein. Wherefore, as King Ahasuerus, "who reigned in Asia over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces," made a magnificent feast in the city of Shushan for the space of an hundred and fourscore days, with all the abundance and grandeur imaginable, to show the riches

of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, (Esth. i. 1-8,) so has this Supreme King resolved to make a most magnificent feast in Heaven, not for the space of an hundred and fourscore days, but for all eternity, to make known the immensity of His riches, of His wisdom, of His bounty, and of His goodness. This is the feast of which Isaiah speaks, saying, "In this mountain shall the LORD of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isa. xxv. 6.) If then GOD makes this magnificent feast in order to make the greatness of His glory known, and if His glory is so great, what must the wealth and the splendour be that are used for this purpose!

This will be understood still more clearly, if we consider how great are the power and the riches of our LORD. So great is His power, that with one single word He created the whole marvellous structure of this world, and with one word He could destroy it: and not one world only, but a thousand millions of worlds He could create with one single word, and destroy with another. And moreover, what He does, He does with so little labour, that He created the highest seraph as easily as the lowest insect; for He is not overpowered under a heavy burthen, nor is He relieved by a lighter one, for whatsoever He wills He has power to do, and whatsoever He wills, He does by merely willing. Say now, seeing that His almighty power is so great, that the glory of His holy Name is so great, and that His love for that glory is so great, what palace, what rejoicings, what feast will He make ready for this end! What is lacking here that it should be less than perfect? Want of hands there is not, for the Maker is infinite in power. Want of head there is not, for He is infinite in wisdom. Want of will there is not, for He is infinite in goodness. Want of wealth there is not, for He is the ocean of all riches. What then will the work be for which the preparations are so great? What handiwork will come forth from the workshop, wherein the artificers are the Omnipotence of the FATHER, the Wisdom of the SON, and the Goodness of the HOLY GHOST! where goodness wills, where wisdom ordains, where omnipotence accomplishes all that is willed by

infinite goodness, and ordained by infinite wisdom, these three qualities being united in each and all of the Divine Persons.

There is another consideration of the same kind to this purpose. For GOD has not prepared this house for His own glory alone, but also for the honour and glory of all His elect. And how careful the LORD is to honour them, and to fulfil His own words, "Them that honour Me I will honour," (1 Sam. ii. 30,) is plainly seen by facts, for even whilst they still live in the world, "He has put all things in subjection under their feet." (Ps. viii. 6.) Look on holy Joshua commanding the sun to stand still in the midst of heaven; as if he held in his hands the reins of the whole mechanism of the world, he made it stay, "the LORD hearkened," as Scripture saith, "unto the voice of a man." (Josh. x. 12-14; Eccus. xlvi. 5.) Look on the Prophet Isaiah giving King Hezekiah his choice what the same sun should do, whether it should go forward or return backward, for it would do either with equal readiness. (Isa. xxxviii. 8; 2 Kings xx. 9-11.) Look on Elijah the Prophet suspending the rain and the clouds of heaven as long as he pleased, and restoring them again by the power of his prayers. (1 Kings xvii. 1-7; xviii. 42-45; S. Jas. v. 17, 18.) And not only in life, but also in death He so greatly honours them, that He has given power to their very bones and relics. Wilt thou not praise GOD when thou seest that the dead bones of Elisha restored life to a man whom some robbers let down into his sepulchre? (2 Kings xiii. 21.) GOD has caused a feast to be kept throughout the Church in honour of the chains of S. Peter, to show how highly He esteems the bodies of the saints, for He will have even the chains to be venerated, only because they have touched them. But what is all this compared with the honour that He gave not to the chains of this Apostle, nor to his bones, nor to his body, but to the shadow of that body, when He gave it the power of which S. Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles, that all the sick who were overshadowed by it were healed. (Acts v. 15.) O Marvellous GOD, O supremely Good, Who giveth honour to the good; He gave to this man what He took not to Himself; for we read not of CHRIST that His shadow healed the sick, as we read of S. Peter. If GOD then so delights to

honour His saints, even in the time and place not of reward but of labour, what glory must we expect that to be which He has prepared wherewith to honour them, and to be honoured in them. If He so greatly desires to honour them, if He has such power and such wisdom wherewith to do it, what must those things be that He has in store for them!

Consider moreover how liberal the LORD is in paying for services done to Him. GOD commanded the patriarch Abraham to sacrifice his only son whom he loved, and when he was about to slay him, GOD said unto him, "Slay him not, for now I know that thou fearest GOD. But by Myself have I sworn that for this son I will give thee sons as many as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea-shore, and amongst them One Who shall be the SAVIOUR of the world, and Who shall be at once thy Son, and the SON of GOD. (Gen. xxii. 2, 10, 12, 16-18.) Thinkest thou that this is good payment? This is a payment worthy of GOD, for GOD is GOD in all things; GOD in paying, GOD in punishing, and GOD in all besides.

David considered one night how he dwelt in an house, and the ark of GOD had none, and he proposed in his thoughts to build an house for it. The next day in the morning GOD sent a Prophet, who said to him, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house for Me, I have sworn, saith the LORD, to build for thee and for thy children an everlasting house, and a perpetual kingdom, and My mercy shall never depart therefrom. (2 Sam. vii. 2, 16; 1 Kings viii. 18.) So He spake, and so He did; for when CHRIST, the SON of David, was born, it was again revealed that "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." (S. Luke i. 33.) Now seeing that heavenly glory is an universal payment and recompense for all the services of all the saints, and that the LORD is so bountiful in rewarding, what may we hereby conjecture this glory to be? Here there is much to consider and to search out.

There is another thought that may help us to form some conjecture, namely, the consideration how great a price GOD asks for this glory, bountiful and liberal as He is. For to give us this glory after our sin, He would accept no lower payment than the

blood and the death of His only-begotten Son. It is for the death of GOD that divine life is given to man ; for the sorrow of GOD divine joy is given him ; and because GOD was crucified between two thieves it is given to man to be among the companies of Angels. Tell me now, if it is possible to tell, what must that be to obtain which for thee it was needful that GOD should sweat drops of Blood ; that He should be bound, scourged, spit upon, smitten on the face, and nailed to the Cross ! Bountiful and abundant in giving as He is, what has GOD in store to give for this ! (S. Matt. x. 37, 38, xvi. 24 ; S. Luke ix. 23, xiv. 26, 27, &c.) If thou couldst sink deep into this abyss, thou wouldst better understand the greatness of this glory than by any other means imaginable.

And besides this, the LORD asks of us in addition the utmost that it is possible to ask of a man, namely, that we take up our cross, and pluck out our right eye, if it offends us, and make no account of father or mother, or of any created thing, when it is opposed to what GOD demands of us. (S. Mark ix. 47.) And when we have done all these things, this Supreme LORD tells us that He gives us glory as a free gift. And He says by S. John, "I am the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxi. 6.) Say now how great must that good be for which GOD asks so much of us, and which, after we have done all this, He says that He gives us freely ! Freely I say, looking at our works as they are in themselves, not according to the value that is given them by grace. Now, if the LORD is so bountiful in bestowing gifts, if His divine liberality has given such variety of things to all men in this life, if the creatures of heaven and earth serve them all equally, if the possession of this world is common to the righteous and to sinners, what must He have in store for the righteous only ! He has given such great treasures where He owed nothing, what will He give where He owes ? If He is so bountiful in giving gifts, how much more in paying for services ? If He gives free gifts with such incalculable abundance, how magnificent will He be in making returns ? No words can possibly declare the glory that He will give to the thankful, seeing that He has given such things to the unthankful.

We get also some idea of the greatness of this glory from the situation and loftiness of the place appointed for it, the heaven of heavens itself, which is at once the greatest of all the heavens, the noblest, the most beautiful, and the most exalted. It is called in Scripture "the land of the living," (Ps. xxvii. 15,) whereby thou mayest understand that this wherein we live is the land of the dying. If then in this land of the dead there are things so excellent and so beautiful, what must there be in the land of those who live for ever! Cast thine eyes on the whole of this visible earth, and see how many and what lovely things there are in it. How great the magnitude of the sky, the brightness and splendour of the sun, the moon, and the stars! How great the loveliness of the earth, the trees, the birds, and all the living creatures! How fair to look upon the open fields, the lofty mountains, the verdant valleys, the cool water-springs, the pleasant rivers meandering like veins through the whole body of the earth, and above all, the vast immensity of oceans alive with so many different and marvellous things! Look upon the pools and lakes of clear waters, those eyes of the earth, or mirrors of heaven! See the green meadows full of roses and flowers, like a starry heaven on a clear night. What shall I say of the veins of gold and silver, and of other precious metals? What of rubies, and emeralds, and diamonds, and other precious stones, which seem to rival the very stars in brightness and in beauty! What of the bright painting and colours of the birds, the living creatures, the flowers, and other things, animate and inanimate! Besides all this, the perfection of art has been added to that of nature, clothing all things with enhanced beauty. Hence come those glittering vessels of gold, those admirable and finished pictures, the well ordered gardens, noble churches and royal palaces adorned with gold and marble, and other things innumerable. If then in this element, which is the lowest of all, and, as we have said, the land of the dying, there are so many pleasant things, what will there be in that exalted place, which, being higher than all the other heavens and elements, is also nobler, richer, and more beautiful? Consider, too, how greatly that part of the heavenly things that is visible to our eyes—namely, the sun, moon, and

stars—surpass all things here below. What then must that other part be which is seen alone by immortal eyes? It is hardly possible to form great enough conjectures respecting this.

We know, also, that man has three different abodes in three different parts of his life. The first is his mother's womb, after his conception; the second is this world, after his birth; the third is heaven, after his death, if he has lived well. And between these three places there is a proportion; as far as the second surpasses the first, so far does the third surpass the second, in duration, in greatness, in beauty, and in every thing. In duration, it is evident; for the duration of life in the first is nine months, in the second it is sometimes more than a hundred years, but in the third it is for ever. For greatness, the first is a woman's womb, the second the whole visible world, the third in proportion as greatly surpasses the second as the second does the first. And as far as it exceeds it in size, it also surpasses it in riches, in beauty, and in all things. If, then, this world is so great and beautiful as we have said, and the other so far surpasses it as we now say, what must the greatness and the beauty of Heaven be!

We may also see this by the difference between the dwellers in these two places, for the form and excellence of a house must be in accordance with the rank of its inhabitants. This, as we have said, is the land of the dying, that of the living; this is the land of sinners, that of the righteous; this of men, that of Angels; this of the penitent, that of the pardoned; this of combatants, that of conquerors; lastly, this of friends and enemies, that of friends and the elect alone. If the inhabitants of these two places are so different, what must the places themselves be, seeing that GOD has made all places fit for those that dwell therein. Truly, "very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of GOD." (Ps. lxxxvii. 2.) Great art thou in compass, fair in thy building, precious in materials, noble in thy inhabitants, sweet in occupations, rich in all good, free and exempt from all evil. In all things thou art great, for most great is He that made thee, and most exalted is the end for which He made thee, and most noble are those blessed inhabitants for whom He made thee.

All this appertains to the accidental glory of the saints. But there is another glory incomparably greater, which is called essential, and this consists in the vision and possession of GOD Himself. Of this S. Augustine speaks thus : "The reward of virtue will be the very Giver Himself of virtue, Who will be seen without end, and loved without satiety, and praised without weariness." This reward, therefore, is the greatest possible ; for it is neither heaven, nor earth, nor sea, nor any other creature, but the very Creator and LORD of all, Who, although He is One and altogether undivided, yet contains in Himself the sum of all good things.

To understand this thou must know that one of the great marvels of that Divine Being is, that although He is One and altogether undivided, yet He contains in Himself with infinite eminence the perfections of all created things. For as He is the Maker and Creator of them all, and as it is He Who rules and guides them to their final end and perfection, He cannot lack that which He gives, nor can that be wanting in Him which He imparts to others. And thus it follows that all those blessed spirits in Him alone will see all things, and enjoy all things, each according to the share of glory that is his portion. For as now the creatures are a mirror wherein we see in some degree the beauty of GOD, so will GOD then be a mirror wherein we shall see that of the creatures, but far more perfectly than we could see it in themselves. Thus GOD will be there the universal Good of all the saints, their perfect happiness, and the fulness of all their desires. There He will be a mirror to our eyes, music to our ears, honey to our taste, and most sweet odour to the sense of smell. There we shall see the manifold beauty and variety of the seasons, the freshness of spring, the brightness of summer, the plenty of autumn, the rest and quiet of winter. There will be all that every sense and power of our soul can desire. There, as S. Bernard says, GOD will be fulness of light to our understanding, abundance of peace to our will, length of eternity to our memory. There will the wisdom of Solomon appear as ignorance, the beauty of Absalom as deformity, the strength of Samson as weakness, the life of the greatest in this world as mortality, the wealth of the kings of the earth as poverty.

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Then, O miserable man, if this be so, and indeed it is, why dost thou wander through the land of Egypt seeking straw, drinking of all the little pools of muddy water, and forsakest the well-spring of happiness, the fountain of living waters? (Exod. v. 12; Jer. ii. 13.) Why dost thou beg for and seek after little scraps of that which thou wouldst find here whole and far better. If thou wouldst have pleasure, lift up thy heart, and consider how pleasant that Good Thing must be which contains in itself the pleasantness of all good things. If thou likest this created life, how much more that Life which created it. If thou prizest the health that is given thee, how much more that Health that gave it. If the knowledge of created things is sweet, how far sweeter the knowledge of their Creator! If thou delightest in beauty, He it is at Whose beauty the sun and the moon are amazed. If high birth and nobility, He is the root and origin of all nobility. If long life and health, here is health and length of days. If plenty and abundance, here is the sum of all good. If music and melody, here the Angels sing and the instruments of the saints sound sweetly in the City of GOD. If friends and good company delight thee, here is the assembly of all the elect, made one in heart and one in soul. If wealth and honour, here is glory and riches in the House of the LORD. And if thou wouldst desire to be released from all troubles and pains, here is perfect freedom and exemption from them all. Under the Old Law, GOD commanded circumcision to be on the eighth day, (Gen. xvii.; Lev. xii.), to show that on the eighth day of the general resurrection, which will succeed the week of this life, GOD will circumcise the afflictions and pains of those who for love of Him have circumcised their excesses and faults. What can be more blessed than such a life so free from every kind of misery, where, as S. Augustine says, there will be no fear of poverty, no weakness of disease; where none is angered, none envies; where there is no need to eat or drink, no ambition for worldly power and honours, no snares of the devil, no fear of the pains of hell, no death of body or of soul, but life ever joyful with the gift of immortality. No discord will ever be there, for all things are in perfect peace and concord.

To all this is added, living in company with the Angels, enjoying the sight of those exalted spirits, and seeing the armies of the saints, brighter than the stars of heaven, glittering with the holiness and obedience of the patriarchs, with the hope of the prophets, with the ruddy crowns of the martyrs, and with the white and blooming wreaths of the virgins. But for the Supreme King Who dwells in the midst of them, what tongue can speak of Him? Assuredly, if it were needful for us to suffer torments every day, and to endure the very pains of hell for a time, in order to see the LORD in His glory, and to enjoy the company of His elect, it would be well worth while to bear it all that we might enjoy so great a good. So far are the words of S. Augustine.

If this good be so great and so universal, what will be the happiness and the glory of those blessed eyes that will feed on it! What will it be to see the loveliness of that city, the glory of its inhabitants, the face of the Creator, the fair beauty of its edifices, the riches of its palaces, the general gladness of that land! What will it be to see the orders of those blessed spirits, the dignity of that sacred company, the majesty of those elders, whom S. John saw sitting upon their seats in the presence of GOD! (Rev. iv. 4.) What will it be to hear the voices of the Angels; the singers, men and women; the harmonious music, not of four voices, like music here below, but of various voices, as many as the number of the elect! What joy will it be to hear them sing that most sweet song that S. John heard in the Apocalypse, (Rev. vii. 12,) "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our GOD for ever and ever. Amen." And if it be so delightful a thing to hear this harmony and consonance of voices, what will it be to see the concord of bodies and souls so conformable! How much more that of men and Angels, and how far more that of men and GOD! And besides all this, to see those beautiful fields, those living fountains, those abundant pastures "upon the high mountains of Israel." (Ezek. xxxiv. 14.) What will it be to sit at that table, to have a seat among those banqueters, to dip thy hand with GOD in the dish, that is, to enjoy His own glory! There will they rest, and rejoice, and sing, and give

praise, and go in and out and find pastures of sweetness unspeakable. Now, if our holy Catholic Faith promises these great blessings as a reward for virtue, who can be so blind and senseless as not to be moved by the hope of so great a reward?

## CHAPTER X.

*Of the Last Claim that constrains us to Virtue; namely, the Fourth of the Four Last Things, the Pains of Hell.*

THE smallest part of this reward would be enough to move our hearts to the love of virtue, whereby such things are to be obtained. What, then, if to the greatness of this glory we add the greatness of the punishment prepared for the wicked? For the wicked man cannot comfort himself by saying, "If I am wicked I shall lose the enjoyment of GOD, and that is all; I shall have neither pain nor glory." One of these widely different lots must be ours. We must either reign for ever with GOD, or burn for ever with the devils. There is no medium between these two extremes, except limbus or purgatory. These are in figure the two baskets that Jeremiah saw before the Temple of the LORD: the one full of good figs, very good; the other of evil figs, very evil, that could not be eaten, they were so evil. (Jer. xxiv. 2, 3.) GOD here signified to the Prophet two sorts of persons, those to whom He would show mercy, and those to whom He would show justice. The lot of the first was so very good that it could not be better; and that of the second was so evil that it could not be worse; because the lot of the good is to see GOD, which is the greatest of all good things; and that of the wicked is to be deprived eternally of GOD, which is the greatest of all evils.

Those who dare to commit a mortal sin should consider this, and know what a burthen they are taking upon them. The men who gain their bread by bearing burthens, when they are hired to carry one, first consider it well, and try to lift it, and

see whether they can carry it. Thou, O wretched man, who art attracted by the pleasure of sin, and for that price undertakest to carry its burthen, consider first, I beseech thee, what is the weight of that burthen, (that is, the punishment inflicted for it) and see if thy shoulders are able to bear it. And that thou mayest do this the better, I will set before thee some considerations whereby thou mayest understand something of the greatness of that punishment, and see more clearly how huge a burthen thou art taking upon thyself when thou sinnest.

First, consider the infinity and greatness of GOD, Who will punish sin, Who in all His works is GOD, that is, in all He is great and admirable, not only in the sea, and earth, and heaven, but also in hell, and in everything. If the LORD in all His works is GOD, and shows Himself to be GOD, He will be so in wrath and justice, and in the punishment of sin. And therefore He said, by Jeremiah, "Fear ye not Me? Will ye not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jer. v. 22.) Which might be plainly expressed thus: Ought ye not to fear the arm of a GOD so mighty as this great work declares Him to be? For as He is great and marvellous in all His ways, so is He in His punishments. For the first He is most worthy to be adored and magnified, and for the latter to be feared and revered. And therefore did the Prophet fear, though sanctified in his mother's womb, and said, "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations! for to Thee doth it appertain?" (Jer. x. 7.) And in another place, "I sat alone, because of Thy hand; for Thou hast filled me with indignation." (Jer. xv. 17.) And although the Prophet knew very well that the indignation was not against himself, yet it was such that it made him tremble. And therefore it is said with reason that the pillars of heaven tremble before the majesty of GOD, and that the great principalities and powers of heaven fear before him, (Job xxvi. 11, iv. 18,) not that they are insecure of their glory, but because the greatness of the Divine Majesty thus fills them with fear and admiration. If these are not without fear, how shall it be with the guilty,

with the despisers of GOD, on whom the whole whirlwind of His vengeance is to burst? This is one of the great causes why we should fear the greatness of this punishment, as S. John plainly teaches us in his Apocalypse, where, speaking of the scourges and judgments of GOD upon Babylon, he says thus : " Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire : for strong is the LORD GOD that judgeth her." (Rev. xviii. 8.) And because S. Paul well knew His power, he said, " It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD." (Heb. x. 31.) It is not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of man, for they are neither so mighty that we cannot escape them, nor so strong as to cast a soul into hell. Wherefore the SAVIOUR said to His disciples, " Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." (S. Luke xii. 4, 5.) These are the hands into which the Apostle says with good reason that it is a fearful thing to fall. They knew well the power of those hands who said, " We will fall into the hands of the LORD, and not into the hands of men." (Ecclus. ii. 22, Vulg.) From these things we perceive that as GOD is great in power, in majesty, and in all His works, He will be great also in wrath, in justice, and in the punishment of the wicked.

This appears still more plainly, when we consider especially the greatness of the Divine Justice, Whose work this punishment is. This is seen in some little degree in its effects, that is, in the fearful judgments of GOD, of which the Holy Scriptures are full. How terrible was the punishment of Dathan and Abiram, (Numb. xvi.,) and of all their company, when the earth swallowed them alive, and they went down quick into the pit, because they rose up against their leaders. Did ever man bear such fearful threatenings as those which we read in Deuteronomy against breakers of the law? Amongst many fearful and terrible threats GOD speaks thus, " The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, . . . and He shall besiege thee in all thy cities throughout thy land, . . . and thou shalt eat the fruit of

thine own body, . . . in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee. . . . The tender and delicate woman among thee, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil . . . toward her children which she shall bear : for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee." (Deut. xxviii. 49-57.) These are fearful punishments. But they were all in this life, and are but a slight shadow and figure of those that are reserved for the next, wherein GOD'S judgment will be shown on those who have despised His mercies. If the shadow be so great and fearful a thing, what will the truth be? And if now when justice is tempered with mercy, and the cup of the anger of the LORD is so much mixed, (Ps. lxxv. 9), it is yet so bitter, what will it be when it is given unmixed, and they shall receive justice without mercy, who have not showed mercy : though even then the punishment is less than the sin deserves.

But it is not only from the greatness of His justice, but also from the greatness of His mercy, on which the wicked presume, that we perceive the greatness of this punishment. What can be more marvellous than to see GOD Incarnate suffering all the torments and dishonour that He suffered, until He ended His life upon a tree ! What greater mercy than His coming down from heaven to take upon Himself and discharging the debts of the world, and shedding His Blood for the very men that shed it ! But if the works of His mercy are so marvellous, those of His righteousness will be no less wondrous : for in GOD there is nothing greater or smaller. All that is in GOD is GOD, and therefore whatever is the greatness of His mercy, that of His justice must be equal and proportionate. By the length of one of our arms we know that of another ; so by the length of the arm of mercy we know that of the arm of justice, for the two are equal. If then at the time when GOD was pleased to show the world the greatness of His mercy, He did things so amazing, and so incredible to the world, that the world accounted them "foolishness," (1 Cor. i. 25,) what will He do when the time of His second coming arrives, the time appointed to

display the greatness of His justice! And, moreover, there will be as many motives for exercising justice as there are iniquities in the world. Mercy, too, found nothing outside of itself to assist it, because there was no part of our human nature that deserved it, but justice will find a fresh motive and occasion for action in every sin that has been committed in the world. By this imagine how dreadful it will be.

S. Bernard declares this in a Sermon on the Epiphany in these words: As at His first coming our LORD showed Himself very ready to forgive, so at the second He will be very severe to punish. As now there is no man who may not reconcile himself with Him, so then will none be able to do so: As His exceeding kindness was manifested at His first coming, so will the severity of His justice be manifested at the last. For GOD is immense, infinite in justice, as well as infinite in mercy. These are the words of S. Bernard, and they show how the very mercy of GOD declares His great justice. Both are divinely explained by the Psalmist, who says, "He is our GOD, even the GOD of Whom cometh salvation: GOD is the LORD, by Whom we escape death. GOD shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his wickedness." (Ps. lxxviii. 20, 21.) See how gentle He is to those who turn to Him, and how severe to the hardened and rebellious.

This is declared to us also by the patience of GOD, towards the whole world, and towards each individual sinner. We see men so vile that from the time they open the eyes of reason to the last years of their life, they spend their whole time in offending GOD and despising His commands, regarding neither promises, nor threats, nor benefits, nor warnings, nor any other thing. And all this time His perfect goodness and patience waited for them, without cutting off the thread of their life, without ceasing to call them in many ways to repentance, and without seeing any amendment in them. Now when this long patience is ended, and He lets loose upon them all the store of His wrath, which has been gradually accumulating so many years in the treasure-house of His justice, how violently, how furiously will it burst upon them! And this is the meaning of the



Apostle's words, "Thinkest thou this, O man, . . . not knowing that the goodness of GOD leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD, Who shall render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom. ii. 3-6.) What is the meaning of these words "treasurest up," but that as a man who is laying up treasure, continues daily to add coin to coin and wealth to wealth, in order to increase his store, so GOD continues every day and every hour to add to the treasure of His wrath, whilst the wicked man is daily adding to its causes by his evil deeds. Now if a man were so diligent in laying up treasure, that there passed no day or hour without his adding something, and that for the space of fifty or sixty years, when at last he opened his coffers, how great a treasure would he find! But thou, O wretched man, scarcely does a day or an hour pass without thy increasing against thyself the treasure of this Divine wrath, which grows every hour, and at every sin! For if there were only the impure glances of thine eyes, the evil desires and hatred of thy heart, the words and oaths of thy lips, they would be enough to fill the world. Add these and all thy other sins together, and what a store of wrath hast thou laid up against thyself in all these years!

And if thou well considerest the ingratitude and malice of the wicked, they also seem to show how great this punishment must be. Consider, on the one hand, the infinite liberality and benignity of GOD towards men: what He has done, and said, and suffered for them; what means and opportunities He has given them of living well; what He has passed over and forgiven; the good things that He has done for them; the evils from which He has delivered them; and all the many benefits and favours that He bestows upon them daily. On the other hand, consider men's forgetfulness of GOD; their ingratitude, their rebellion, their unfaithfulness, their blasphemies, their contempt of Him and of His commandments, which is so great, that not only for the most trifling interest, but often for nothing and without cause, out of mere shameless wickedness, they trample all the commands of GOD under their feet. And those

who thus despise His great majesty as if He were a god of wood ; they who have so often, as S. Paul says, "trodden under foot the SON of GOD," and "counted the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing," (Heb. x. 29 ; vi. 6,) and crucified Him afresh, and smitten Him in the face by deeds worse than those of the heathen : what can they expect but that when the day of account comes, a satisfaction shall be made at their cost to GOD'S honour, equal to the offence that they have committed against it? For GOD is a just Judge, and therefore it appertains to Him to make a just amends, and justly to balance the punishment of the offender against the insult to the offended. But if the offended person is GOD, the whole body and soul of the reprobate must be delivered up to make amends by their sufferings for such offences.

And if the Blood of the SON of GOD was necessary to make amends for the offence against GOD, the dignity of the person supplying what was wanting in the severity of the punishment, what will it be when the amends is to be made not with any dignity of the person, but only with the greatness of the penalty?

And besides the nature of the Judge, consider that also of the executioner who is to fulfil the sentence—namely, the devil—and see what thou hast to expect from his hands. See how he showed his cruelty in his treatment of a man who was given into his power—holy Job. For against this righteous man he exercised every possible kind of cruelty without the least tenderness or pity. He burned his sheep, he took away his oxen and asses, he slew his servants, he overthrew his house, he killed his children, he covered him with sore boils from head to foot, he left him nothing but a dunghill to sit upon, and a potsherd to scrape himself withal ; yet he left him his wife and his friends, whom it was more cruel to leave than to slay, that their words might be worse than the worms in his wounds, and gnaw his inmost heart. Thus he treated holy Job. (Job i., ii.) And how did he deal with the SAVIOUR of the world on that sad night when He was delivered over to the power of darkness? This cannot be told in few words.

Now, seeing that this enemy and all his companions are so

fierce, so inhuman, so savage, so bloodthirsty, such haters of the human race, and so mighty to do hurt ; when, thou, miserable wretch, by the decree of GOD'S justice, findest thyself in their hands to suffer whatever cruelties they are pleased to exercise on thee, and this not for a night or a day, but for ever and ever, what will be thy state? Oh, what a day of blackness will it be when thou seest thyself in the power of these wolves !

S. John gives us a most horrible picture of these fiends in his Apocalypse, where he says, "I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth ; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit ; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace. . . . And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth : and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree ; but only those men which have not the seal of GOD in their foreheads. . . . And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it. . . . And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle ; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron ; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails." (Rev. ix. 1-10.) These are the words of S. John. Say now, I pray thee, what was the intention of the HOLY GHOST, Who is the author of this Scripture, when, under these horrible and unheard-of figures, He was pleased to make known to us the severity of the scourges of GOD'S justice? What was His intention but to warn us by the frightful horror of these things how great will be the anger of GOD, what the instruments of His justice, what the punishments of the wicked, and what the power over us of our enemies, that the dread of such things might make us tremble to offend GOD. For who is the star that fell from

heaven, and to whom the key of the bottomless pit was given, but that bright and glorious angel who fell from thence, and to whom dominion was given over the darkness? And who are the locusts, so fierce and so well-armed, but his helpers and ministers, the devils, with their fury and their weapons? What are the green things that they had no power to hurt, but the righteous, who flourish with the moisture of Divine grace, and bring forth fruits of everlasting life? And what are they that have not on them the seal of GOD, but they who lack His Spirit, which is the mark of His servants, and of the sheep of His pasture? Now all this army of GOD'S justice is prepared against these wretched men, that in this life and in the next, each in its way, they may be tormented by the devils whom they have served, as the Egyptians were by the flies whom they worshipped. (Exod. viii. 24.) How terrible will it be in that place to see those monstrous figures and those horrible countenances! How dreadful to see that devouring dragon, that crooked serpent, that great Behemoth, of whom it is written in Job, that "he moveth his tail like a cedar," that "he drinketh up a river," and "the mountains bring him forth food." (Job xxvi. 13; xl. 17, 23, 20.)

All these things well considered sufficiently declare to us how great the punishment of the wicked will be. For what can be expected from all the great things of which we have spoken, but very great punishments? What can be expected from the immensity and greatness of GOD; from the greatness of His justice in punishing sin; from the greatness of His patience in bearing with sinners; from the multitude of benefits by which He so often seeks to draw them to Himself; and from the greatness of the hatred wherewith He abhors sin, (for being offensive to an infinite majesty it merits an infinite hatred,) and from the greatness of our enemies' rage, enemies so powerful to torment, so furious to hate us? What, I say, can be expected from all these great things, but a very great punishment of sin! Since then the punishment prepared for sin is so great, and here there can be no mistake, for faith assures us of it, should not those who believe and confess this consider what a load they take on themselves when they sin, since by the very act of

sinning they condemn themselves to a punishment whose greatness is so abundantly proved?

But though all these considerations are great cause for fear, it is far more fearful to consider the duration of these pains. For if there were some end or some manner of relief after many thousands of years, it would be a great comfort for the wicked. But what shall I say of an eternity that knows no end, but endures as long as the duration of GOD Himself! So great is this space that, as a doctor says, if one of the lost shed one single material tear in every thousand years, more water would issue from his eyes than the whole world is able to contain. What can be more dreadful than this? Truly it is so great a thing, that if all the pains of hell were but the prick of a pin, yet, as they are to endure for ever, this alone ought to induce men to bear all the afflictions in the world to avoid it. Oh, if this duration, this "for ever" would abide in thy heart, how would it profit thee! We read of a man of the world that he set himself once to think very earnestly of this duration of sufferings, and being terrified at their length, he thought thus with himself; "No reasonable man would accept the empire of the world with the condition that he must lie for thirty or forty years in a bed, even if it were one of roses and flowers; what folly is it then, for things so much less, to run the risk of lying in a bed of fire for endless ages!" This single consideration sank so deeply into this man, and produced such great effects upon him, that he changed his life entirely, and came afterwards to be a great saint, and a prelate of the Church. And what say ye to this, ye self-indulgent, who are kept awake all night by the humming of a gnat, how will ye lie on a bed of fire surrounded by flames on every side, and that not merely for a summer's night, but throughout eternity? The Prophet Isaiah asks this question, and says, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. xxxiii. 14.) Who has strength to bear such heat so long a time? O senseless people! O men deluded by the old deceiver and disturber of the world! What can be more unreasonable than that they who are so anxious to provide themselves with all the trifles of this world should be thus insen-

sible to things of such importance ! What, do we see, if we see not this ? What do we fear, if we fear not this ? For what do we provide, if we provide not for this ?

Is it possible that any one will not willingly take his part with virtue, even if it involves much labour, to avoid these great evils ? Assuredly if GOD made an agreement with a man, and said to him, "As long as thou livest thou shalt have a certain painful malady, so acute that it never shall suffer thee to rest day or night ; or if thou wouldst be free from this pain, thou must practise certain bodily austerities all thy life, consider which thou wilt choose," no man could be so irrational but that common sense would lead him, if only out of self-love, to choose the last of these alternatives, rather than to endure the former so long. Now, seeing that the torments of which we speak are so much greater, that they last so much longer, and that what GOD requires of us is so much less than to exercise bodily austerities all thy life, can we but accept so little a labour to avoid so long a torment ? Can any be so deceived as to refuse it ?

The penalty of the man who would not do a little penance here to redeem himself from so great an evil, is that he will there do eternal penance, and it will profit him nothing. We read of the burning fiery furnace, which Nebuchadnezzar caused to be heated in Babylon, that the flames streamed forth above it "forty and nine cubits" (Song of the Three Children, v. 24), yet it lacked one cubit to make up the number of fifty, which makes the year of jubilee, to give us to understand that the flames of the everlasting smoke of Babylon, which is hell, although they burn so much and so grievously torment the lost, will never obtain for them the remission and the grace of the true jubilee. O fruitless pains ! O barren tears ! O rigorous penance, and utterly hopeless ! How small a portion of what men fruitlessly endure there, if it had been willingly taken here, would have sufficed to save them ! How easily might these sufferings have been redeemed, and by what light afflictions ! Let fountains of tears flow from our eyes, let not the groans of our hearts cease. "Therefore I will wail a howl," says the Prophet, "I will go stripped and naked :

I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. For her wound is incurable." (Micah i. 8, 9.)

And if men did not believe these things to be true, and most entirely true, it would be no marvel that they so disregard them. But holding it as matter of faith, and knowing assuredly, that, as the Saviour says, heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away (S. Luke xxi. 33); that believing this, they should live in such strange carelessness, is indeed a wonder passing all astonishment. Tell me, thou lost and blinded man, what honey canst thou find in all the riches and pleasures of the world, that is worth buying at this price? "Didst thou possess," says S. Jerome, "the wisdom of Solomon, the beauty of Absalom, the strength of Samson, the length of days of Enoch, the riches of Cræsus, and the power of Octavius, what would all these things avail thee, if at the end of thy life thy body was given to the worms, and thy soul to the devils, to be tormented with the rich miser in the everlasting torments?"

## CHAPTER XI.

*The Eleventh Reason that obliges us to follow Virtue, namely, the Inestimable Advantages that it promises us in this present Life.*

I KNOW not what excuses men may allege for neglecting to follow virtue, when there are so many reasons why they should follow it. For what GOD is, what He deserves, what He has given us, what He promises, and what He threatens, are reasons, and no small ones. Let us then inquire how it is that so many Christians who believe and confess all these things, yet are so deficient in virtue. For as to unbelievers who know not virtue, it is no marvel that they do not prize it, as a clown, who finds a precious stone in digging, cares not for it, because he knows not its value. But that a Christian who knows all these things should live as if he believed none of them, forgetful of GOD, a slave to vice, subject to his passions, attached to visible things, forgetful of things invisible, and given over to all manner of sins, as if he expected neither death, judgment, heaven, nor hell, is indeed a marvellous thing. Wherefore, as I said, it is reasonable to inquire whence comes this paralysis, this lethargy, or, as I might call it, this enchantment.

This great evil has not one root only, but many and various. Not the least of them is a general delusion in which men of the world live, believing that all that GOD promises to virtue is kept for the next life, and that nothing is given to it here. For men are so self-interested, and so moved by present objects, that, when they see nothing present, they care not for the future. So it was in the times of the prophets. For when Ezekiel the



Prophet set great promises and threatenings before them from GOD, they made a jest of them, and said, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off." (Ezek. xii. 27.) And scoffing at the Prophet Isaiah for the same cause, they mocked his words, saying, "Wait and wait again; wait and wait again; order and order again; order and order again; a little while hence; a little while hence." (Isa. xxviii. 10, Vulg.) This is one of the chief reasons why the wicked turn away from GOD'S commandments; they think that nothing will be given them at present, but all kept for the future. So Solomon, the wisest of men, has said, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccles. viii. 11.) And the same Solomon says, "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event to all," as it appears outwardly; "to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not;" and therefore he says, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead," (Eccles. ix. 2, 3), and so their end is hell, because they think that good and ill success visit equally the houses of the good and of the wicked. And what Solomon says here, the wicked plainly confess by Malachi the Prophet, saying, "It is vain to serve GOD; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt GOD are even delivered." (Mal. iii. 14, 15.) This is the language of the wicked, and this is one of the greatest incentives to their wickedness. For, as S. Ambrose says, "it seems to them a very hard thing to buy hopes with dangers; that is, to buy future good for present evils, and to let go what they have already in their hand, for the hope of what may be given them in future.

Now, to banish this mischievous delusion, I know not where I can better begin than by the words and tears of the SAVIOUR, Who beheld the unhappy city of Jerusalem, "and wept over it,

saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." (S. Luke xix. 41, 42.) The SAVIOUR considered on one hand the great good that had come, together with His Person, to that people, for all the graces and treasures of Heaven had descended with the LORD of Heaven; and on the other hand, how they, offended at the humble dress and appearance of the LORD, would not receive Him; and how by this sin they would not only lose the riches and grace of His visitation, but would also destroy their country and their city. Filled with sorrow for this, He shed these tears, and spoke these words, so short and incomplete; whose very shortness made them more significant. This same sentiment and these very words may be applied in a manner to the subject on which we are speaking. For, if we consider on one hand the beauty of virtue, and the great riches and graces that accompany her, and see on the other hand how hidden all these things are from the eyes of carnal men, and how she wanders as an outcast on the earth, thinkest thou not that we too have reason to shed tears, and to say with the SAVIOUR, "Oh, if thou hadst known!" That is, Oh, that GOD would open thine eyes this moment to see the treasures, the delights, the riches, the peace, the freedom, the tranquillity, the light, the pleasures, the favours, and all the good things that accompany virtue, how wouldst thou prize it, how wouldst thou desire it, how carefully and laboriously wouldst thou seek it! But all this is hid from carnal eyes, which, looking only on the hard rind of virtue, and not having experienced its inward sweetness, see nothing but what is hard, rough, and gloomy, and account it to be a coin current in the next life, but not in this; believing that if there is any good in it, it is not for this world, but for the other. Wherefore, reasoning according to the flesh, they say that they will not buy hopes with perils, and risk the present for the future.

This they say because they are offended at the outward appearance of virtue; for they understand not that the philosophy of CHRIST is like CHRIST Himself, Who being outwardly a Man, and so lowly a Man, was inwardly GOD, and the LORD of all creation. Hence it is said of the faithful, that they are dead

to the world, and their life is "hid with CHRIST in GOD." (Col. iii. 3.) For, as the life of CHRIST was thus hid, so also is that of those who imitate that life. We read that men used anciently to make images which they called Sileni, which outwardly appeared very coarse and rough, but within were very richly decorated; so that the deformity was public, but the beauty secret; the one deceived the eyes of the ignorant, the other attracted those of the learned. Such assuredly was the life of the Prophets, such was that of the Apostles, and such is that of all perfect Christians, and such also was that of the LORD of them all.

And if thou sayest still that virtue is difficult, and hard to practise, thou shouldst fix thine eyes on the helps that GOD has provided, by the infused virtues, by the gifts of the HOLY GHOST, by the Sacraments of the New Law, and by all the various aids and helps that He gives us to serve as oars and sails to the ship in its navigation, and as wings to the bird in its flight. Consider also the very name and nature of virtue, which is essentially a habit, a most noble habit, and that it is the natural effect of habit to make us work with ease and pleasure. Consider also that the LORD has promised His servants not only the good things of glory, but also those of grace; the former for the next life, but the latter for this, as the Prophet says, "The LORD will give grace and glory," (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, Bible version), providing them as it were with two saddle-bags well filled, the one with stores for the present life, the other for that which is to come. Understand, therefore, from this that there must be more in virtue than outwardly appears. Consider also that the Author of nature never fails in necessary things, but has perfectly provided the creatures with everything that they need; therefore, as there is nothing in the world more necessary or more important than virtue, He will not leave it dependent on a purpose so mutable, an understanding so blind, a will so feeble, an appetite so ill inclined, and a nature altogether so corrupted with sin, without providing it with all the capacities that it needs as oars wherewith to navigate the ocean of this world. For it would not be reasonable that Divine Providence should be so solicitous in furnishing gnats, ants, and

spiders with the capacities and instruments that they need to preserve their life, and should neglect to provide man with what is needful for the attainment of virtue.

I say more. If the devil provides so many pleasures and satisfactions, at least in outward appearance, for his followers in payment of their services, is it possible that GOD can be so grudging towards His faithful friends and servants as to leave them famishing and parched with thirst in the midst of their labours? How! dost thou think the purity of virtue so cast down, and that of vice so much in the ascendant, that GOD would suffer the one to have such great advantages, and the other such loss and such discouragement? What then means GOD'S answer by Malachi the Prophet to the complaints and murmurings of the wicked? He saith, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth GOD and him that serveth Him not." (Mal. iii. 18.) Here He is not contented with the advantage that the good have in the next life, of which He treats further on, but says of the present time, "Ye shall return and see." Which might be expanded, "I will not have you wait till the next life to know this advantage, but return, and you will immediately understand the difference between the evil and the good; the riches of one, and the poverty of the other; the peace of one, and the strife of the other; the satisfaction of one, and the discontents of the other; the light in which one lives, and the darkness wherein the other walks; and you will see by experience how far greater advantages this side has than you supposed."

GOD gives nearly the same answer by Isaiah to others who in the same delusion and false persuasion mocked at the righteous. First, He declares His great power and glory, as displayed in His dealings with them, showing thereby how far happier they are that serve GOD than they who serve Him not. Next, He declares the heavy chastisements that are laid up for the wicked. And after this He treats of the joy and prosperity of the righteous, saying thus, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem," that is, with the soul of the righteous, "and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations;

that ye may be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream : . . . ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem," that is, in My House. " And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish as an herb ; and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward His servants." (Isa. lxvi. 5, 10-14.) This means, that as by the greatness of the sky, earth, and sea, and by the beauty of the sun, moon, and stars, men come to know GOD'S almightiness and beauty, so will the righteous know the greatness of His power, riches, and goodness by the great gifts and mercies that they will receive from Him, and experience in themselves. So that, as GOD showed His great severity towards the wicked by the plagues and chastisements that He sent on Pharaoh, so He will declare His great love and goodness towards the good by the admirable favours and benefits that He will confer on them. Blessed indeed is that soul that shall be made an example to display GOD'S great goodness, and wretched is that in whose punishment His justice shall be made manifest ; for as His goodness and His justice are both inestimably great, what must the streams be that flow from such abundant fountains?

I add yet more, and ask this question : If the way of virtue seems to thee gloomy and barren, what did Divine Wisdom mean by these words : " I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment : that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance ; and I will fill their treasures ?" (Prov. viii. 20, 21.) What are these treasures and this substance but those of this heavenly wisdom, which surpass all worldly wealth, and which are communicated to those who walk in the way of righteousness, which is the same thing as virtue? For if riches more worthy of the name than any other were not found here, how could the Apostle give thanks to GOD for the Corinthians, saying that they were rich with all kinds of spiritual riches? (1 Cor. i. 4, 5,) and observe that he plainly calls them rich, whereas he calls others not absolutely rich, but only " rich in this world." (1 Tim. vi. 17.)

For the further confirmation of this truth, consider the answer of our LORD to S. Peter, when he asked what should be the reward of those who had forsaken all for His sake. (S. Matt. xix. 27.) It is given by S. Mark in these words, "Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." (S. Mark x. 29, 30.) These are CHRIST'S words, and we must not overpass them lightly. And first, thou canst not deny that He expressly distinguishes here between the recompense that is given to the righteous in this life, and that which they will receive in the next, promising one in the future, and offering the other at once. Nor wilt thou assert that it is possible for this promise to fail, for it is certain that heaven and earth shall pass "away rather than one word or one tittle" of His, however impossible it may seem. (S. Luke xxi. 33; S. Matt. v. 18.) For as we believe that GOD is Three and One, because He has said it, although it is a mystery above all reason, so are we obliged to believe this truth, although it is beyond all understanding: for it rests upon the same testimony.

Tell me then, what is the hundredfold more that is given to the righteous in this life? For we do not usually see great estates, or riches, or temporal dignities, or worldly pomps given to them. On the contrary, many of them live neglected and forgotten by the world, in great poverty, affliction, and sickness. How can we reconcile this with the infallible truth of this declaration, but by confessing that GOD provides them with so many and so great spiritual gifts and treasures, as suffice without any of this worldly parade, to give them greater happiness, greater joy, greater contentment, and greater rest than all the possessions in the world? Nor is this very wonderful; for as we read that GOD is not restricted to give sustenance to the bodies of men with bread alone, (S. Matt. iv.), but has many other means of preserving them, so neither is He restricted to give satisfaction and contentment to their souls with these temporal gifts alone, but can do it very well without them: and so in truth He has dealt with all the saints, whose prayers, whose exercises, whose tears,

and whose delights, have greatly exalted all consolations, worldly joys, and pleasures. And thus it is most true that they receive a hundredfold more than what they left ; for false and counterfeit good things they receive true ; for doubtful, certain ; for material, spiritual ; for cares, repose ; for heart-aches, tranquillity ; and for a vicious and abominable life, one that is virtuous and full of joy. If then thou hast despised worldly things for the love of Christ, thou wilt find in Him inestimable treasures ; if thou hast rejected false honours, in Him thou wilt find true ; if thou hast renounced the love of thy parents, the Eternal FATHER will gladden thee with more tender caresses ; and if thou hast put from thee pestilential and poisonous pleasures, thou wilt find in Him sweeter and more exalted joys. And when thou hast attained to this thou wilt find that all the things that once pleased thee, not only please thee no longer, but are objects of thy abhorrence and loathing. For when that heavenly light has touched and illumined our eyes, all things put on a new aspect, and appear to us under a very different form. That which before appeared sweet now seems bitter to thee, and that which appeared bitter is sweet ; that which terrified now delights thee, and what seemed beautiful is now ugly. It was so before, but thou knewest it not. Thus is CHRIST'S promise fulfilled : for temporal good of the body He gives us the spiritual good of the soul ; for what are called the gifts of fortune He gives us the gifts of grace, which are incomparably greater and more capable of enriching and satisfying the heart of man.

In confirmation of this I will here relate a memorable example which is found in the Book of Illustrious Men of the Cistercian Order. It is written there, that when the great S. Bernard was preaching in Flanders with a most fervent desire of drawing men to GOD, amongst those who were converted by the especial movement of the HOLY GHOST was a person of considerable rank, named Arnulf, whom the world held bound with such strong chains that, when at last he forsook it and took the habit in the monastery of Clairvaux, the blessed Father so greatly rejoiced in this conversion that he said publicly that CHRIST was no less admirable in the conversion of Brother

Arnulf than in the resurrection of Lazarus, (S. John xi.), having raised him and brought him to a new life when he was tied with the bonds of so many sins, and buried in the grave of so many pleasures. The after course of Arnulf's life was no less admirable than his conversion ; but, because it would take too long to recount all his virtues, I come to what concerns our present purpose. This holy man often suffered from a disease which caused him such pain as brought him to the verge of death. Once when he was in this state, almost senseless, speechless, and with no hope of life remaining, they gave him Extreme Unction. Shortly after, he recovered his senses, and suddenly began to praise GOD and to cry aloud, "True are all the things that Thou hast said, O Good JESUS." And when he repeated these words many times, the monks were astonished, and asked him how he was, and why he said this ; but he made no answer, and only repeated the same sentence, "True are all the things that Thou hast said, O Good JESUS." Some who were there said that the great pain had taken away his senses, and that this was why he said these words. Then he answered, "Not so, my Brothers ; not so, but with all my sense and with all my understanding I say that all things are true that our SAVIOUR JESUS spake." They answered, "We also confess this ; but why dost thou say it now?" He replied, "Because the LORD has said in His Gospel that every one who renounces the love of his kindred for His sake, 'shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.' (S. Mark x. 30.) And I experience in myself, and confess to you, that I am now receiving the hundredfold in this life, for I give you to know that the intense pain which I am suffering is so pleasant to me, by reason of the sure hope of salvation that is given me with it, that I would not change it for all that I have left in this world multiplied an hundredfold. And if I, who am so great a sinner, receive such consolation in my agonies, what must saints and perfect men receive in their joys ? For truly the spiritual joy that I am now receiving outweighs a hundred thousand times all earthly joy that I received in the world." When he said this, they all marvelled to hear such words from an unlearned monk, a layman, and plainly perceived



that it was the HOLY GHOST, dwelling in his soul, Who said them.

This is an evident instance how without pomp or parade of temporal worldly possessions GOD gives His servants greater contentment and better things than what they left for Him, and what a delusion it is to suppose that nothing is given to virtue here.

Now the object of this and the next twelve chapters is to dispel this dangerous delusion. We will treat in them of twelve marvellous fruits and privileges that accompany virtue in this life, in order to show the lovers of the world that there is more honey here than they think. And although experience and the practice of virtue are necessary to understand this perfectly, the lack of them may be supplied by faith, which confesses the truth of the Sacred Scriptures, for I intend to prove all that I say in this part by testimonies therefrom as shall leave no room for doubt.

## CHAPTER XII.

*Of the Twelfth Title under which we are obliged to the Practice of Virtue, namely, its First Privilege, the Special Providence whereby God watches over the Good to guide them into all Good, and over the Wicked to punish their Wickedness.*

**T**HE first and chiefest of these privileges and advantages, the fountain from which all the others are derived, is GOD's fatherly care and providence over those who serve Him. For although He watches over all His creatures with a general providence, yet He has a more especial care for those whom He has received for His own. For as He has adopted them into the place of sons, and given them the spirit and the heart of sons, He has Himself the heart of a most loving Father towards them, and in conformity with this love are His care and providence over them.

But what this providence is no man can comprehend except one who has experienced it, or who has carefully and attentively read the Sacred Scriptures and diligently marked the passages that treat of this. For any one who does this will see that almost the whole of Scripture, from the beginning to the end, is full of it. For, as the world turns on two poles, so does Scripture on two points, requiring and promising. On the one hand, GOD requires of man obedience and the keeping of His commands; and on the other, He promises very great rewards to those who keep, and threatens grievous punishments to those who break them. And this doctrine is so distributed, that all the moral books of Holy Scripture require and promise, whilst

the historical books show the fulfilment of both requirements and promises, enabling us to see practically the difference between GOD's dealings with the righteous and with the wicked. But as GOD is so liberal and munificent, and man so weak and wretched ; He so rich to promise, and we so poor to give, the proportion between His gifts and His requirements is very unequal ; for He asks little and gives much, He asks love and obedience, which He Himself gives us ; and for this He offers us inestimable treasures of grace and glory in this life and in the next. And among these treasures let us speak first of His fatherly love and providence over those whom He accepts as sons ; which surpasses all the love and care that all earthly fathers can give to theirs. We have good ground for this assertion, for no father on earth ever laid up or prepared such great good for his children as that which GOD has prepared and promised to His, even a partaking in His own glory. No father ever so toiled for them as He, Who spared not to shed His Blood. Nor does any take such continual care of them as He, Who keeps them ever before His eyes, and helps them in all their troubles. And this David confesses, saying, "And as for me, Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before Thy face for ever." (Ps. xli. 12, Bible version.) That is, "Thou never turnest away Thine eyes from me, but carest for me continually." And in another Psalm he says, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. The countenance of the LORD is against them that do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth." (Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16.)

But because this providence of GOD over him is the greatest treasure of the good Christian, and because the more certainty he has of this, the greater is his joy and gladness, it will be well to put together here some testimonies from the Divine Scriptures, each of which is like a royal patent, and a fresh confirmation of the rich promises and assurances of GOD'S covenant. It is said then in Ecclesiasticus, "The eyes of the LORD are upon them that love Him, He is their mighty protection and strong stay, a defence from heat, and a cover from the sun at noon, a preservation from stumbling, and an help from falling.

He raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes; He giveth health, life, and blessing." (Ecclus. xxxiv. 16, 17.) These are the words of the son of Sirach, and they show how many offices the LORD exercises towards His own. David the Prophet says in a Psalm, "The LORD ordereth a good man's going, and maketh his way acceptable to Himself. Though he fall, he shall not be cast away, for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand." (Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24.) What hurt will a fall do, thinkest thou, to one who falls on so soft a cushion as the hand of GOD? He saith in another place, "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of all. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken." (Ps. xxxiv. 19, 20.) But this providence is still more magnified in the holy gospel, where the SAVIOUR shows what very great and especial care He takes of them by saying that He numbers the very hairs of their head, and that not one of those hairs shall perish. (S. Luke xii. 7, xxi. 18.) For what will not He care for Who cares for our hairs? And if this is a great thing, Zechariah the Prophet signifies as much when he says, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) It would be much if GOD had said, "He that toucheth you toucheth Me;" but much more to say, "He that toucheth you in any part, toucheth Me in the apple of Mine eye."

And not only does He guard us by Himself, but also by the ministry of Angels, and so it is said in a Psalm, "He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone." (Ps. xci. 11, 12.) Sawest thou ever such a coach or litter as this, the hands of the Angels to travel in? Thus then do the holy Angels, who are our elder brethren, carry in their arms righteous men, who are their younger brethren, unable to go alone, and needing to be carried, and they bear them thus not only in life but also in death, as we see plainly in the case of the beggar Lazarus, who "died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom." (S. Luke xvi. 22.) It is said in another Psalm, "The Angel of the LORD tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) And how mightily a guard they are is expressed more clearly in the trans-

lation of S. Jerome, who says thus, "The Angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." (Ps. xxxiv. 7, Bible version.) What king in the world has such a guard as this? We see an instance of this in the Book of Kings : When the army of the King of Syria came to take Elisha the Prophet, and his servant trembled for fear, the holy Prophet prayed to GOD, and besought Him to open the eyes of the terrified youth, that he might see how many more there were with him than with his adversaries. "And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw : and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha." (2 Kings vi. 15-17.) This is the garrison spoken of in the Song of Songs, in the words, "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" (the type of the Church, and of the soul that is in grace). "As it were the company of two armies," (Cant. vii. 1, vi. 13,) that is, a guard of holy Angels. The spouse signifies this again in the same Book by another figure, saying, "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's ; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war : every man hath his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night." (Cant. iii. 7, 8.) By all these figures does the HOLY GHOST declare to us GOD'S great care for the souls of the righteous. And whence comes it that a man conceived in sin, living in so evil-inclined a flesh, and among so many snares and perils, may continue many years without one wandering thought that is deadly sin, but from this heedful guardianship and providence of GOD ?

And so great is this care, that He not only preserves them from evil and guides them into all good, but even the very evils into which, by divine permission, they sometimes fall, He makes a means of good to them, making them more cautious, more humble, more thankful to Him Who has brought them out of such dangers, and forgiven them so many sins. For in this sense the Apostle says that "all things work together for good to them that love GOD." (Rom. viii. 28.)

And if these favours are a subject for great admiration, far more admirable is it that GOD deals thus not only with His servants, but also with their children and posterity, and with all

that belongs to them, as He Himself has testified, saying, "I the LORD thy GOD am a jealous GOD, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." (Exod. xx. 5, 6.) This was seen in the case of David, whose posterity He would not destroy, after so many years, for their father's sake, (2 Sam. vii. 12-16; 1 Kings xi. 36, xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19, xx. 6; 1 Chron. xxi. 7,) though they often deserved it by their sins. So also He dealt with Abraham, whose children he so often forgave for love of their fathers; (Gen. xxxii. 13, 14;) while He promised that even Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, should be multiplied and magnified on earth, because he was Abraham's son. (Gen. xvii. 13.) And even his servant He directed and guided in the way that he went, and in the affair that he had in hand, the taking a wife for his master's son, because he was Abraham's servant. (Gen. xxiv.) And not only had He respect to the servant for love of the good master, but He had regard to the bad master for love of the good servant; for we read that He gave great blessings to Joseph's master, who was an idolater, for love of the holy youth who was in his house. (Gen. xxxix. 5.) What greater kindness and providence could there be than this! Who will not resolve to serve a Master so bountiful, so faithful, and Who so recompenses all who serve Him, and all that belong to them!

As this divine providence produces so many and such marvellous effects, GOD is called in Holy Scripture by many and various names; but the most venerated and the most usual is that of FATHER, by which His most Loving SON continually calls Him in the Gospel. (S. John v. 17, 43, vi. 39, x. 17, 18, 25, 29, 30, 32, 37; S. Matt. v. 16, 45, vi. 6, 9, 14, xviii. 14, xxiii. 9.) And not only in the Gospel, we find it also in many places of the Old Testament; as the Prophet signified in the psalm, when he said, "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the LORD merciful unto them that fear Him; for He knoweth whereof we are made." (Ps. ciii. 13, 14.)

But another Prophet thought it not enough to call Him Father, because His love and care surpass that of all earthly fathers,

and therefore he said these words, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not" (Isa. lxiii. 16.)—giving us to understand that those who were fathers after the flesh deserved not the name in comparison with GOD. But because the tenderest and most vehement parental love is that of a mother, the LORD is not content with calling Himself Father, but He also calls Himself a Mother or more than a Mother. For by Isaiah He speaks these most sweet words, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me." (Isa. xlix. 15, 16.) The walls are the guardianship of Angels, "who do always behold the face of My Father." (S. Matt. xviii. 10.) Could words express more tenderness or more care than these? Can any be so blind or so despondent as not to rejoice, to revive and lift up his head at such assurances of providence and of love? For if thou considerest that the speaker of these words is GOD, Whose truth cannot fail, Whose riches have no limit, Whose power is infinite, what canst thou fear? what wilt thou not hope? how canst thou fail to rejoice at such words? such securities? such providence? such an assurance of love?

But there is more than this, for the LORD is not contented with comparing His love with the common and ordinary love of mothers, but he chooses that mother, which is of all mothers most renowned for this love, namely, the eagle, and says, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the LORD alone did lead him." (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.) And still more openly did the same Prophet declare this to the same people, after they had reached the Promised Land, saying, "The LORD thy GOD bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." (Deut. i. 31.)

And as He takes to Himself the names of Father and Mother, so He gives us that of children, and of very dear children, as He plainly testifies by Jeremiah, saying, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do

earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him : I will surely have mercy upon him." (Jer. xxxi. 20.) Each word of this (for they are GOD'S words) ought to be deeply pondered and highly valued, and should fill our hearts with love and tenderness towards GOD, Whose heart was so tender towards His creatures.

And by reason of this same providence, in addition to the name of FATHER, He takes also that of Shepherd, as we see in His Gospel. (S. Luke xv. 3-7.) And to show how great are the love and care of this pastoral providence, He spake these words, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." (S. John x. 14, 15.) How dost Thou know them, LORD? With what eyes dost Thou look on them? "Even as My FATHER looketh upon me," He saith, "and I on Him, so do I look on My sheep, and they on Me." O blessed eyes! O happy sight! O happy providence! What greater glory, what greater treasure can any man desire than to be looked upon by the SON of GOD in such manner as His FATHER looks on Him! For although the comparison be not one of entire equality, seeing that there is a difference between a natural and an adopted son, yet it is a glorious thing to be compared with this. And what are the dealings of this providence and its effects! GOD declares and promises in the amplest way by Ezekiel the Prophet, speaking thus, "I will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be : there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the LORD GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up

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that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick : but I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will feed them with judgment," that is, with great care and prudence. And a little further on He adds, "And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land ; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing ; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season ; there shall be showers of blessing," (Ezek. xxxiv. 11-16, 25, 26,) that is, healthful and profitable showers, not hurtful to the pastures of the flock. These are the words of Ezekiel. Say now, what more could be promised? Or how could all this be represented in sweeter, more loving, or better-chosen words? For it is certain that the LORD is not here speaking of a material flock, but of His spiritual flock, composed of men, as the text expressly says. Nor does He promise abundance of grass and of temporal goods, which are common to the good and to the bad ; but abundance of favours, and graces, and special providences, with which GOD rules and governs this spiritual flock, like a shepherd, as He Himself expresses it in Isaiah, saying, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. xl. 11.) What can be sweeter or more tender than this? He speaks of the same pastoral offices and benefits throughout the Psalm which begins, "*Dominus regit me,*" or, as S. Jerome translates it, "The Lord is my Shepherd." (Ps. xxiii.) The whole of which treats of all the offices of a shepherd, which I do not set down here, because everybody may read and understand them for himself.

And as He calls Himself a Shepherd, because He rules us, so does He take the name of King, because He defends us ; of Master, because He teaches us ; Physician, because He heals us ; Bearer, because He carries us in His arms ; and Keeper, because He so carefully watches over and guards us. The whole of Divine Scripture is full of these names. But of all these names the tenderest, the most affectionate, and that which most declares this providence, is that of Spouse, by which He

calls Himself, in the Song of Songs, and in many other parts of Scripture. Thus He invites the soul of the sinner who desires to call on Him, saying, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" (Jer. iii. 4.) And the Apostle dwells on this name most impressively. For after the words that the first man said to the first woman, namely, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh," the Apostle goes on to say, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning CHRIST and the Church." (Eph. v. 31, 32.) For the Church is the spouse of CHRIST; and so also in its own manner is every soul that is in grace. What then may we not hope from One Who bears this name, and Who bears it not in vain?

But what is the use of going through Holy Scripture, searching out here a name and there a name, when all names that promise any good apply to the LORD? For those who love and seek Him find in Him all that they desire. Wherefore S. Ambrose says in a sermon, "We have all things in CHRIST, and they all are CHRIST to us. If thou desirest to be healed of thy wounds, He is the Physician; if thou burnest with fever, He is the Fountain; art thou wearied with the burthen of thy sins? He is Justice; dost thou need aid? He is Strength; fearest thou death? He is Life; wouldst thou flee from darkness? He is Light; dost thou desire to go to heaven? He is the Way; wouldst thou have food? He is Sustenance." See, my Brother, how many names this LORD has, being in Himself One and Indivisible; for, whilst in Himself He is One, yet to us He is all things, that He may remedy our innumerable necessities.

But at this rate we should never have done quoting all the passages of Scripture that refer to this subject. I have pointed out these for the comfort and encouragement of those who serve GOD, and in hopes of drawing to His service those who serve Him not; for assuredly there is no treasure under heaven greater than that we have here gathered. For as those who have served kings in some important expedition, under letters and warrants promising great rewards, keep those letters most carefully, and produce them when they claim remuneration, so the

servants of GOD keep in their hearts all these words and divine warrants, far surer than those of earthly kings. On them they fix their hopes, by them they are strengthened in labour, through them they are confident in perils, with them they comfort themselves in affliction, to them they have recourse in all necessities. They kindle in them love for such a Master, and constrain them to give themselves up wholly to His service, seeing that He so faithfully promises to employ His whole Self for their good, being All to them in all things. Thus we see that a practical knowledge of this truth is one of the great foundations of the Christian life.

Tell me now, I pray, is it possible to imagine anything more rich, more precious, more estimable, and more desirable than this? Can any greater good be imagined in this life than to have GOD as a Father, a Mother, a Shepherd, a Physician, a Tutor, a Guardian, a Wall, a Defender, a Security; nay more, as a Spouse; in short, as our All? What has the world to give its lovers in comparison with this? What reason then have they who possess this to rejoice, to take comfort, to have courage, and to glory in it above all things! "Be glad, O ye righteous," saith the Prophet, "and rejoice in the LORD; and be joyful, all ye that are true of heart." (Ps. xxxii. 12.) As much as to say plainly, "Let one rejoice in the riches and honours of the world, another in his noble lineage, another in the favour and confidence of his sovereign, another in pre-eminent office and dignity; but ye who trust that GOD is yours, your inheritance and your possession, be glad and rejoice more truly in this, because it as far surpasses all these causes of joy as GOD surpasses all things. And so David expressly declares in a Psalm, saying, "Save me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity; whose sons grow up as the young plants, and whose daughters are as the polished corners of the Temple; whose garners are full and plenteous with all manner of store; whose sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets. They call them happy that are in such a case; yea rather, blessed are the people that have the LORD for their GOD." (Ps. cxliv. 11-13, 15, Vulgate.) Why,

David? The reason is plain. For in Him alone they possess all that they can desire. Let others then glory in all these things; but I, though a very rich and mighty king, will glory in Him alone. Thus did another holy Prophet glory when he said, "I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD of my salvation. The LORD GOD is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me walk upon mine high places." (Hab. iii. 18, 19.) This then is the treasure, this is the glory laid up in this world for those who serve GOD. And this is one of the great reasons that should incline all to serve Him, and one of the very just causes of complaint that He has against those who serve Him not, He being so good a master, so faithful a helper and defender. And this is the complaint that He sent Jeremiah the Prophet to make against His people, saying, "What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" And further on, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?" Implying, Assuredly not, for victories and prosperity have come to them by me. "Wherefore say My people, we are lords (literally, We have gone away from serving Thee); we will come no more unto Thee?" "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number." (Jer. ii. 5, 31, 32.) Me, their Ornament, their Glory, and their Beauty. But if GOD made such complaints in the times of the Law, when His mercies were smaller, how much reason has He now to complain when they are as much more abundant as they are more spiritual and more divine!

And if we be not so much moved by love of that blessed providential care that watches over the good, let us be moved at least by fear of the providence, if we may call it so, that GOD exercises over the wicked; which consists in measuring them with their own measure, and dealing with them according to their forgetfulness and contempt of Him, forgetting those that forget Him, and despising them that despise Him. To indicate this more clearly, He commanded Hosea to marry a woman that was an adulteress, signifying thereby the spiritual adultery into which that people had fallen, when they forsook their

ful Spouse and LORD. And a son who was born of that marriage He commanded to be named by a Hebrew name, which means, "Ye are not My people," to signify that as they, by their sins, did not acknowledge or serve Him as GOD, so neither would He acknowledge or deal with them as His people. And in confirmation of this sentence He said further afterwards, "Plead with your mother, plead ; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband." (Hosea i. 2, 9, ii. 2.) Signifying that as she had not kept her faith and obedience of a good wife, so he would not keep to her the love and care of a true husband. See how plainly the LORD teaches us that He metes to every man according to his own measure, being such towards a man, as the man is towards Him.

Thus then do the wicked live, forgotten as it were by GOD ; and thus they are in this world like property without an owner, like a school without a master, like a ship without a helm, like a wandering flock without a shepherd, which never escapes the wolves. And therefore GOD says to them by Zechariah the Prophet, "I will not feed you : that that dieth, let it die ; and that that is cut off, let it be cut off ; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." (Zech. xi. 9.) And He signified the same in the Song of Moses, saying, "I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be." (Deut. xxxii. 20.)

But still more fully does He declare this kind of providence by Isaiah, speaking of His people under the name of a vineyard, against which (because when He had cultivated and dug it, and done many things to improve it, it yet brought not forth the fruit that it ought) He gives sentence thus, "I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard : I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up ; and break down the wall thereof ; and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste : it shall not be pruned nor digged : but there shall come up briars and thorns : I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." (Isa. v. 5, 6.) That is, I will deprive it of all the help and all the efficacious assistance that I had provided for it, and the result will be its fall and utter destruction. Thinkest thou such a providence as this is much to be dreaded ?

Sav now, can there be greater danger or greater wretchedness

than to live deprived of the Fatherly care and providence of GOD, and exposed to all the casualties of the world, and to all the calamities and miseries of this life? For as, on the one hand, this world is a stormy sea, a desert full of robbers and savage beasts, as the disasters and accidents of human life are so many, the enemies who fight against us so numerous and so strong, the snares that are hid for us so plentiful and so hidden, the caltrops strewed everywhere under our feet so abundant; and as man, on the other hand, is so weak and naked a creature, so blind, so unarmed, so poor in strength and counsel: if he lacks this protection, this support and favour of GOD, what shall the weak do among so many strong, the dwarf among so many giants, the blind among so many snares, the lonely and unarmed man among so many and such mighty enemies?

But even this is not all, for the providence of GOD is not content with turning its eyes away from the wicked, and leaving them to fall into so many troubles and afflictions, but it actually causes and procures them. So that the eyes that before watched for their good, now watch for their punishment, as He plainly testifies by Amos, saying, "I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." (Amos ix. 4.) As much as to say plainly, "The providential care that I had over them shall be so changed that I Who once watched to defend them, will now watch to punish them, and to pay them what their iniquities deserve." He declares this yet more expressly by Hosea, saying, "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness:" I will punish and destroy them as clothes are destroyed by the moth. But because this seemed but a mild and tardy kind of persecution, He adds a swifter and more vehement sort, and says, "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him." (Hos. v. 12, 14.) What greater misery wouldst thou have?

Nor is it a less clear testimony to this kind of providence that we read in Amos the Prophet, who, after saying that GOD would slay the wicked with the sword for their sins of avarice, immediately continues thus, "He that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them ; though they climb up into heaven, thence will I bring them down ; and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence ; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them ; and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them ; and I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." (Amos ix. 1-4 ; Ps. cxxxix.) These are the words of the Prophet. Say now, what man reading these words, and remembering that they are from GOD, and seeing what His providential care is over the wicked, will not tremble from head to foot at seeing how mighty an enemy he has against him, and how carefully and diligently he seeks him, besieges him, guards every road against him, and watches for his destruction. How can he rest ? How can he eat a morsel that tastes good to him, having such eyes, such fury, such a persecutor, such an arm against him ? For if it be so great an evil to be deprived of the help and providential care of the LORD, what will it be to have the arms of that very providence turned against thee ? the sword that was drawn against thine enemies used against thee ? the eyes that watched to defend thee now watching for thy destruction ? the arm that was to support thee employed to cast thee down ? the heart that thought towards thee thoughts of peace and love now thinking thoughts of affliction and of pain ? and He Who should have been thy shield, thy shelter, and thy protection, now become as a moth to devour thee, and as a lion to tear thee ? How can any man sleep securely who knows that while he sleeps GOD, like the rod that Jeremiah saw, is waking to punish and afflict him ? (Jer. i. 11, 12, Vulgate.) What counsel can there be against this counsel ? what arm against this arm ? and what providence against this providence ? "Who," as it is written in Job, "hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered ?" (Job ix. 4.)

Truly, this is so great an evil that one of GOD'S greatest punishments to the wicked in this world is to withdraw from them the hand of His Fatherly providence, as He Himself

tēstifies in many passages of Holy Scripture. For in one place He says, "My people would not hear My voice, and Israel would not obey Me," therefore I no longer dealt with them as before. "I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations," (Ps. lxxxi. 12, 13), and thus they went daily from bad to worse. And by Hosea the Prophet He says, "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy GOD, I will also forget thy children." (Hosea iv. 6.) So that, as one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a wife is that her good husband should give her a letter of divorcement, and desert her; and one of the worst things that can happen to a vineyard is that its master should forsake it, and cease to cultivate it, for from a vineyard it soon degenerates into a wilderness: so one of the greatest evils that can befall a soul is that GOD should withdraw His hand from it. For what is a soul without GOD but a vineyard without a vinedresser, a garden without a gardener, a ship without a pilot, an army without a commander, a country without a ruler, a body without a soul?

Behold then, my Brethren, how GOD besets thee on all sides, and how this motive also besets thee; therefore if love and desire for His fatherly providence are not enough to move thy heart, let it be moved at least by fear of being thus forsaken, for those who are not moved by the desire of good are often moved by the fear of great evil.



### CHAPTER XIII.

*Of the Second Privilege of Virtue, namely, the Grace of the Holy Ghost which is given to the Virtuous.*

**T**HIS Fatherly providence, as we have said, is the source of all the other privileges and benefits that GOD bestows on His servants. For to this providence it belongs to provide them with all that is necessary for the attainment of their end, that is, of their ultimate perfection and felicity, by helping and assisting them in all their necessities, and also by creating in their soul all the capacities and virtues, and all the infused habits that are requisite for this purpose. The first of these is the Grace of the HOLY GHOST, which is the origin (under this Divine Providence) of all other heavenly privileges and gifts. This, therefore, is "the best robe" which was given to the prodigal son when he was received into his father's house. (S. Luke xv. 22.) And if thou askest what grace is? I answer that grace, according to the theologians, is a participation in the Divine Nature—that is, in the holiness, the goodness, the purity, and the nobleness of GOD, whereby man puts away the baseness and vileness that he inherits from Adam, and becomes a partaker in GOD's holiness and nobleness, putting off himself, and putting on CHRIST. The saints illustrate this by the common example of iron cast into the fire, which ceases not to be iron, but yet comes forth glowing and luminous as the fire itself; so that, still keeping the substance and the name of iron, it has the brightness, the heat, and the other qualities of fire. In like manner, grace, which is a heavenly quality infused by GOD into the soul, has the marvellous power of transforming man into

GOD, so that, without ceasing to be man, he partakes in his way of the virtues and purity of GOD, as was the case with him who said, "I live ; yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

Grace is also a supernatural and divine mould, which makes a man live a life in accordance with itself, that is, a supernatural and divine life. And here the providence of GOD shines forth wondrously ; for, as it is His Will that man should live two lives, one natural and the other supernatural, so He has provided him with two moulds, which are as it were the souls of these two lives, and which enable him to live them both. Wherefore, as from the soul, which is a natural mould, proceed all the powers and senses with which we live the natural life ; so from grace, which is a supernatural mould, proceed all the gifts and graces of the HOLY GHOST, with which we live the supernatural life ; just as a man who works at two trades is provided with two sets of tools.

Grace is also a spiritual ornament and vesture of the soul, made by the hand of the HOLY GHOST, and makes it so fair and so pleasing in the eyes of GOD, that He accepts it as His child and His bride. In this vesture the Prophet gloried when he said, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my GOD ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." (Isa. lxi. 10.) These ornaments and jewels are all the virtues and the gifts of the HOLY GHOST, wherewith the soul of the righteous is decked and adorned by the hand of GOD. This is the "vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours," (Ps. xlv. 10), in which the king's daughter was attired when she stood upon the right hand of her spouse. For from grace proceed the divers colours of all the virtues and of all heavenly habits wherein the beauty of the soul consists.

From this thou mayest understand the effects that grace works in the soul wherein it dwells. One, and the very chief of them, is to make the soul so fair and pleasing in the eyes of GOD that He takes it, as we have said, to be His child, His bride, His temple, and His abode, wherein He has His delights

with the children of men. And not only does it make the soul fair, but also strong; for the virtues which proceed from grace, like Samson's hair, (Judges xvi.), give not only beauty but strength. And the soul is praised for both these qualities in the Song of Songs, where the Angels, marvelling at its beauty, say, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Cant. vi. 10.) Thus grace is like a coat of mail, that guards a man from head to foot, and makes him strong and beautiful: so strong that, as S. Thomas says, "The smallest degree of grace is sufficient to overcome all the sins in the world."

Another effect is to make a man so pleasing to GOD, and of such importance in His eyes, that every deliberate act done by him that is not a sin is pleasing to GOD, and helps to gain him eternal life. So that not only acts of virtue, but natural actions, such as eating, drinking, or sleeping, are pleasing unto GOD, and help towards obtaining this great good, because the doer is so acceptable to GOD that everything that he does that is not sin is acceptable, and obtains reward from Him.

Another effect is to make a man the child of GOD by adoption, and an inheritor of His kingdom, and to write His name in the Book of Life, wherein all the righteous are written, whereby he obtains a right to the rich inheritance of Heaven. The greatness of this privilege the SAVIOUR impressed on His disciples, when they returned again with joy, because even the devils were subject unto them in His Name, and He said unto them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (S. Luke x. 17, 20.) And truly this is the best thing that the heart of man can desire in this life.

Finally, to conclude, grace gives capacity for all good, smooths the way to heaven, makes the yoke of GOD easy, enables a man to run in the way of virtue, restores and heals diseased nature, and thus makes that light to it which before was heavy, and, by the virtues which proceed from it, reforms and strengthens all the faculties of our soul in an unspeakable manner, enlightening the understanding, enkindling the will, refreshing the memory, strengthening the free-will, moderating the concu-

piscible part that it may not lust after evil, and strengthening the irascible that it be not timid in good. And besides this, as all the natural passions of these two inferior powers of our nature are but stepfathers to virtue, and serve as gates and entrances whereby the devils find a way into our souls, He has sent an infused virtue from heaven, to stand as a guard and captain at each of these gates, and to secure us against the evil that might find entrance by that passion. Thus, to defend us against the appetite of gluttony, He has set the virtue of temperance ; against the lust of the flesh, chastity ; against the desire of honour, humility ; and so with all the rest.

And above all these things, grace causes GOD to dwell in the soul, ruling, defending, and guiding it to heaven ; abiding there as a King in His kingdom, as a Commander in His army, as the Father of a family in His home, as a Master in His school, and as a Shepherd in His flock, to perform spiritually all the functions, and to exercise all the care of these different offices. Then, if this pearl of great price, from which we gain so much good, always accompanies virtue, who will not most gladly imitate the wise merchant man in the Gospel, who “went and sold all that he had, and bought it?” (S. Matt. xiii. 46.)

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *Of the Supernatural Light and Knowledge which our Lord gives to the Virtuous.*

THE third privilege that is granted to virtue is an especial light and wisdom which our LORD communicates to the righteous, and, like those we have been speaking of, it proceeds from grace. The reason of this is, that it belongs to grace to heal nature; and therefore, while it heals the desire and will diseased by sin, it likewise cures the understanding darkened by the same cause, so that the man may both know what he ought to do, and also have power to perform it. In accordance with this, S. Gregory says in the *Morals*, "It is a punishment for sin that man cannot do what he knows, and it is also a punishment that he knows it not." And therefore the Prophet said, "The LORD is my Light" against ignorance, "and my Salvation" against impotence. (Ps. xxvii. 1.) As Light He teaches us what to desire, as Salvation He gives power to obtain it, and thus both the desire and the power proceed from grace. And besides the habit of faith and of infused prudence, which enlightens our understanding and shows it what to believe, and what to do, the gifts of the HOLY GHOST are given also to complete this cure. The four first gifts belong to the intellect—namely, that of wisdom, to give us knowledge of high things; that of knowledge, for lower ones; that of understanding, whereby we penetrate into the divine mysteries, and see their fitness and beauty; and that of counsel, to teach us how to act in the manifold perplexities that befall us in this life. All these bright rays of light proceed from grace, and therefore it is called

in Holy Scripture "an unction," which S. John says "teacheth us of all things." (1 John ii. 20, 27.) For as oil is the liquid which especially serves to feed light and to heal wounds, so this divine unction heals the wounds of our will and enlightens the darkness of our understanding. This is that oil, more precious than all sweet ointments, in which the holy king David rejoiced when he said, "Thou hast anointed my head with oil, (Ps. xxiii. 5); for plainly he spake not here of the material head, nor of material oil, but of the spiritual head, that is, the higher part of the soul, wherein the understanding resides, as Didymus declares on this passage, and of spiritual oil, that is, the light of the HOLY GHOST, which feeds this lamp. And the light of this oil the holy king possessed in great abundance, as he declares in another Psalm, saying, "Thou shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly." (Ps. li. 6.)

There is another reason, too, for this. It is the office of grace to make a man virtuous, and this cannot be done but by leading him to sorrow and repentance for his past life; to love of GOD, abhorrence of sin, desire for heavenly things, and contempt of the world. Now, it is evident that the will cannot entertain these affections unless the understanding has proportionate light and knowledge to awaken them; for the will is a blind power, and cannot take a step without the understanding going before to enlighten it, and show it the good and evil of things, that it may love or hate them accordingly. And therefore S. Thomas says, that as the love of GOD grows in the soul of the righteous, the knowledge of GOD'S goodness, of His loveliness, and of His beauty, grows in the same proportion; if the one increases by a hundred degrees, the other grows by as many; for he who loves much knows many grounds for love in the beloved object, and he who loves little knows few. And what I say of the love of GOD I say also of fear, of hope and of abhorrence of sin, which no man would abhor above all things unless he knew it to be so great an evil that it deserved this extreme hatred. For, as the HOLY GHOST wills that these effects should exist in the soul of the righteous, He must also will the existence of the causes that produce them, even as, willing a variety of effects upon the earth, He willed a variety of causes and influences in heaven.

Moreover, if grace indeed brings GOD to dwell in the soul of the righteous, as we have declared above, and GOD, as S. John so often tells us, is "the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," (S. John i. 9; iii. 19-21; viii. 12), it is plain that the more pure and clean He finds the soul the more will the rays of His divine light shine in it, as those of the sun do in a mirror that is very clean and polished. And therefore S. Augustine calls GOD the Wisdom of the purified soul, because He enlightens such a soul with the rays of His grace, teaching it all that is needful for its salvation. Nor is it marvellous that He should deal thus with men, for He does the same with all other creatures, which know all that is needful for their preservation by instinct given by the Author of Nature. Who teaches the sheep which of the many varieties of plants in the field will harm it and which will do it good, so that it feeds on one and leaves the other? Who makes the sheep know its friend from its enemy, so that it flees from the wolf and follows the dog, but this same LORD? If GOD then gives this knowledge to the brutes to preserve their natural life, much more will He give better knowledge to the righteous to preserve their spiritual life, for man needs it no less for things above his nature than the brute does for those which are in conformity with his. And if the providence of GOD has been so careful concerning the works of nature, how much more careful will it be concerning those of grace, which are so much more excellent, and so far exalted above man's capacities.

And this illustration not only proves that such knowledge exists, but also declares of what kind it is; not speculative, but practical knowledge; not given that we may know, but that we may act; not to make learned reasoners, but virtuous doers. And therefore it does not remain only in the understanding, like knowledge acquired in the schools, but communicates its virtue to the will, inclining it to all those things to which it awakens and invites it. For this is the property of the instincts that proceed from the HOLY GHOST, Who, being a most perfect teacher, is able perfectly to instruct His scholars in what they ought to know. In accordance with this the bride says, in Solomon's Song, "My soul failed when He spake." (Cant. v. 6.)

This passage plainly shows the difference between the teaching of the HOLY GHOST and any other, for other teaching does but enlighten the understanding, whereas His affects the will, and penetrates by its power into the most secret recesses of our soul, working in every man what is needful for his reformation; and as the Apostle declared when he said, "The Word of GOD is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," (Heb. iv. 12,) breaking and dividing the union whereby the spirit joins itself to the flesh, and is made one with her. (1 Cor. vi. 16.) For the power and efficacy of the Divine Word destroy this league, and enable a man to live a spiritual instead of a carnal life.

This, then, is one of the chief effects of grace, and one of the especial privileges of the virtuous in this life. But perchance, though proved by such evident reasons, it may seem to carnal men hard to understand or difficult to believe, and therefore we will proceed to prove it by many sure testimonies, both from the Old and from the New Testament. In the New the LORD speaks thus by S. John, "The Comforter, Which is the HOLY GHOST, Whom the FATHER shall send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." (S. John xiv. 26.) And in another place, "It is written in the Prophets, And they all shall be taught of GOD. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the FATHER, cometh unto Me." (S. John vi. 45.) In accordance with this, the same LORD says by Jeremiah, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34,) whereas before He wrote them on tables of stone," (2 Cor. iii. 3; Exod. xxxi. 18,) "and they all shall know Me." And by the Prophet Isaiah the Lord thus declares the prosperity of His people, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD." (Isa. liv. 4-13.) And by the same Prophet he had said before, "I am the LORD thy GOD Which teacheth thee to profit,



Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go." (Isa. xlvi. 17.) From these words we learn that there are two sorts of knowledge, that of the saints, and that of the learned; that of the righteous, and that of the wise of this world: (Ps. xlix. 3,) and it is of the first that Solomon says, "The knowledge of the holy is understanding," (Prov. ix. 10,) for by intellectual knowledge we know, but understanding teaches us how to act, and that is the knowledge that is given to the saints. (Wisd. x.)

But in the Psalms of David, how often do we find this wisdom promised? In one Psalm he says, "The mouth of the righteous is exercised in wisdom, and his tongue will be talking of judgment." (Ps. xxxvii. 31.) In another, GOD promises the good man, "I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go, and I will guide thee with Mine eye." (Ps. xxxii. 9.) And in a former Psalm the same Prophet asks, "What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose." (Ps. xxv. 11.) And in the same Psalm, where we read, "The LORD is the strength of them that fear Him," (Ps. xxv. 13, Vulg.), S. Jerome translates, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant," that is, His most holy laws, the knowledge of which is bright light to the understanding, pleasant food to the will, and most sweet refreshment to the whole man. And this knowledge the Prophet calls "a green pasture" wherein GOD feeds him, "waters of comfort" wherewith He refreshes Him, and "a table" which He has prepared to strengthen him against all the fury of them that trouble him. (Ps. xxiii. 2, 5.)

For the same reason the Prophet repeatedly asks for this inward light and instruction in the 119th Psalm, saying, "I am Thy servant; O grant me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies." "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law." "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart." (Ps. cxix. 125, 18, 34.) Again and again he repeats this petition, a sure token how well he knows the value of this instruction, and the LORD'S willingness to impart it.

What can be more glorious, then, than to have such a Master,

and to study in such a school, in a school where the LORD gives the instruction, and teaches heavenly wisdom to His elect? If men went, as S. Jerome says, from the utmost ends of Spain and France to Rome, to see Titus Livius, renowned for his eloquence; and if Apollonius, accounted so wise, made the circuit of Mount Caucasus, and travelled over a large part of the world to see Hiarcas seated on a throne of gold, and surrounded by a few disciples, reasoning of the movements of the heavens and of the stars, what ought men to do to hear GOD seated on the throne of their heart, and teaching them, not how the heavens move, but how heaven is to be gained.

And lest thou shouldst think that this instruction is a thing of slight value, hear what the Prophet David says of it, though such light as he had is not given to all, "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments." (Ps. cxix. 99, 100.) But the LORD promises more, and much more even than this, to His servants by Isaiah, saying, "Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. lviii. 10, 11.) What is this light with which GOD fills the souls of His servants, but the knowledge that He gives them of the things that belong to their salvation? For He teaches them how great are the beauty of virtue, the deformity of vice, the emptiness of the world, the dignity of grace, the greatness of glory, the sweetness of the comforts of the HOLY GHOST, the goodness of GOD, the malice of the devil, the shortness of this life, and the general delusion of almost all who live in it. And with this knowledge, as the same Prophet says, He makes them "to ride upon the high places of the earth," (Isa. lviii. 14,) from whence their eyes see "the King in His beauty," and "behold the land that is very far off." (Isa. xxxiii. 17.) And this is why heavenly things appear to them as they are, for they see them near at hand; whilst those of earth seem very little, not only because they are so, but because they see them from afar, whilst the wicked, on the contrary, see the things of heaven from a great distance, but those of earth close at hand.

This is why those who are partakers of this heavenly gift are neither puffed up by prosperity, nor dismayed by adversity, for by this light they see how little is all that the world can give and take away in comparison with what GOD gives. And therefore the son of Sirach says that "the discourse of a godly man is always with wisdom as the sun, but a fool changeth as the moon." (Ecclus. xxvii. 11.) On which S. Ambrose says in an Epistle, The wise man is not broken down by fear, nor changed by power, nor lifted up by prosperity, nor overcome by adversity. For where wisdom is, there is virtue, constancy, and fortitude. Therefore he is always the same in himself, he is neither greater nor less in altered circumstances, nor is he carried away by every blast of doctrine, but continues perfect in CHRIST, grounded in charity, and rooted in faith.

Nor is there any cause to marvel that this wisdom has such power, for, as we have said, it is not the wisdom of earth, but of heaven; it does not puff up, but edifies; it does not merely illumine the understanding with its light, but it moves the will with its heat. Thus it moved that of S. Augustine, who writes that when he heard the Psalms and sweetly-sounding voices in the Church he wept; and that these voices entered through the ears into his inmost heart, and that the heat of his devotion melted his heart within him, and tears flowed from his eyes, to his great benefit. O blessed tears, O blessed school, O blessed wisdom, that produces such saints! What can be compared to this wisdom? "It cannot be gotten for gold," saith Job, "neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." And after all this laudation, the holy man ends by saying, "Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job xxviii. 15-19, 28.)

This then, my Brother, is one of the great inducements whereby we would lead thee to virtue; for virtue alone has the

key to this treasure. And thus Solomon speaks to us in his Proverbs, saying, "If thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of GOD. For the LORD giveth wisdom : out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. ii. 1, 6.) And this wisdom continues not unchanged ; but every day fresh light and fresh knowledge is added to it, for "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, (Prov. iv. 18), the day of that blessed eternity, wherein we shall not say, with Job's friends, that GOD'S inspirations were "secretly brought" to us, (Job iv. 12), but where we shall plainly see and hear GOD Himself.

This then is the wisdom that the righteous enjoy, whilst the wicked live in horrible Egyptian darkness, "even darkness that may be felt." In figure of this we read that in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt, there was light, whilst in that of Egypt it was dark both by day and by night, (Exod. x. 22, 23), a representation of the horrible blindness and the dark night wherein the wicked live, as they themselves confess by Isaiah, saying, "We wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes : we stumble at noon-day as in the night ; we are in desolate places as dead men." (Isa. lix. 9, 10.) Wouldst thou deny this? Say then what blindness, what follies, can be worse than those we see in the wicked every instant? What blindness greater than to sell the kingdom of heaven for the delusive pleasures of this world? not to fear hell? not to seek heaven? not to fear sin? not to care for the judgment of GOD? not to value His promises and threats? not to dread death, which awaits us hourly? not to prepare for our account? not to see that a pleasure is momentary, and its torment eternal? "They will not be learned nor understand," saith the Prophet, "but walk on still in darkness." (Ps. lxxxii. 5.) Thus from darkness they go to darkness ; from darkness within to darkness without ; from darkness of this life to darkness in the life to come.

At the conclusion of all this I think it right to add a warning, that although all that I have said concerning this heavenly

wisdom and light of the HOLY GHOST is most true, no man, however accepted he may be, is to hold himself above submitting humbly to the opinion and judgment of his superiors, and especially of those who are set as masters and teachers in the Church, (1 Cor. xii. 28), as I have said at greater length in another place. For who was fuller of light than S. Paul the Apostle, or than Moses, who spake with GOD "face to face?" (Exod. xxxiii. 11.) Yet one of them went up to Jerusalem to communicate to the Apostles that Gospel which he had learned in the third heaven, (Gal. ii. 1, 2), and the other "hearkened unto the voice of his father-in-law," Jethro, a heathen. (Exod. xviii. 24.) And the reason of this is, that the inward aid of grace does not exclude the outward help of the Church, for GOD'S providence has been pleased to provide both for our weakness, which needed all help. Thus, even as the natural warmth of the body is helped by the outward warmth from the heavens; and nature, which does its utmost for the health of each individual, is yet assisted by outward medicines created for that purpose, so are the interior illumination and endowments of grace greatly assisted by the light and teaching of the Church; and he would be undeserving of the former who refused humbly to submit to the latter.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *Of the Fourth Privilege of Virtue, namely, the Comfort of the Holy Ghost, given to the Righteous.*

**A**FTER the inward light of the HOLY GHOST, which illumines the darkness of our understanding, I might name as the fourth privilege of virtue, charity, or the love of GOD, which inflames our will, especially as the Apostle makes this the first among the fruits of the HOLY GHOST. (Gal. v. 22.) But because we are treating here rather of the favours and privileges given to virtue than of virtue itself; and because charity is a virtue, and the most excellent of virtues, we will not treat of it here, though it might be very well included in the list, not as a virtue, but as a marvellous gift given by GOD to the righteous, which in an unspeakable manner inflames their will inwardly, and inclines it to love GOD above all things that can be loved. For this love, as it is more perfect, is sweeter and more delightful, so that it might be counted as a fruit and reward of the other virtues and of itself. But that I may not seem ostentatious in the praise of virtue, and as there are so many things to be said, I will put in the fourth place the joy of the HOLY GHOST, which, as S. Paul tells us, (Gal. v. 22), is the natural property of that love, and is one of the chief fruits of that Spirit.

This privilege is derived from the last. For, as we said before, the light and knowledge which our LORD gives to His servants does not rest in the understanding only, but descends to the will, where it sheds abroad light and brightness that make it marvellously to joy and rejoice in GOD. Thus, as material light produces from itself sensible heat, so does this

spiritual light produce spiritual joy in the soul, as the Prophet says, "There is sprung up a light for the righteous, and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted." (Ps. xcvi. 11.) We have indeed treated elsewhere of this subject, but it is so rich and abundant that there is material for many treatises without risk of clashing.

It will be well, then, to declare how great this joy is, for the knowledge of this truth will have much effect in making men love virtue. For it is a well-known thing, that as every kind of evil that exists is found in vice, so everything that is good, whether for comeliness or for profit, is found most perfectly in virtue, except joy and sweetness, which the wicked say that it lacks. And as the human heart is so greedy after pleasure, these men practically say that they choose rather that which gives pleasure, with all its drawbacks, than that which fails to do so with every advantage. Lactantius Firmianus expresses this in these words, "Because virtues are mingled with bitterness, and vices are accompanied with pleasure, men, offended with one and enticed by the other, run headlong into vice and forsake virtue." This is the cause of this evil, and therefore we should confer no small benefit to men if we could free them from this delusion, and show them evidently that the path of virtue is far pleasanter than that of vice. This is what I now intend to prove by evident reasons, and especially by authorities and testimonies from Holy Scripture, which are the surest and strongest proofs on such subjects. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (S. Luke xxi. 33.)

Say now, blind and deluded man, if the way of GOD is so dull and joyless as thou picturest it, what meant David the Prophet when he said, "O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee?" (Ps. xxxi. 21), words which declare not only how plentiful is the goodness prepared for the righteous, but also the cause why the wicked see it not, namely, that GOD has laid it up out of their sight. And what meant the same Prophet by saying, "My soul, be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee?" (Ps. xxxv. 9, 10.) Does not this show us that the joy of the righteous is so great that, though

it is directly received by the spirit, it overflows into the flesh, so that the flesh, which naturally delights only in carnal things comes to delight in those that are spiritual, and to rejoice in the living GOD, and that with so great a joy that all the bones of the body are refreshed with marvellous sweetness, and occasion the man to cry out, "LORD, who is like unto Thee? what joys are like Thy joys? what gladness, what love, what peace, what satisfaction can any creature give like that which Thou givest?"

What did the same Prophet mean, moreover, when he said, "The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous," (Ps. cxviii. 15,) but to make us understand that true joy and true health are not found in the homes of sinners, but in the souls of the faithful? And what meant he when he said, "Let the righteous feast and rejoice before GOD, let them also be merry and joyful," (Ps. lxxviii. 3, Vulg.) but to tell us of the spiritual feasts and banquetings wherewith GOD often marvellously refreshes the souls of His elect by the taste of heavenly things? In these banquetings they are given to drink that most sweet wine which the same Prophet praises when he says, "They shall be inebriated with the plenteousness of Thy house, and Thou shalt give them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasures." (Ps. xxxvi. 8, Vulg.) How could he more strongly express the greatness of these pleasures, than by the word inebriation? Or how could he better declare the force with which they carry away the heart of man, and transport it into GOD, than by calling them a torrent? This is signified also by inebriation, for as one who has drunk much wine thereby loses the use of his senses, and becomes like a dead man, so the man who is intoxicated with this heavenly wine becomes dead to the world and to all inordinate delight and enjoyment in worldly things.

What, moreover, meant the Prophet when he said, "Blessed is the people, O LORD, that can rejoice in Thee?" (Ps. lxxxix. 16.) Some men would say, perchance, "Blessed is the people that is provided with abundance of all things, surrounded by good walls and bulwarks, and guarded by a strong garrison." But the holy King, well knowing the value of these things, yet calls none blessed but those who know by experience what it is to be glad and rejoice in GOD, nor does he speak of an ordinary



degree of joy, but of a joy that deserves the name of jubilation, which S. Gregory explains to be a spiritual joy so great that it cannot be expressed by words, nor restrained from manifesting itself by outward signs and actions. Blessed indeed is the people that has so grown and increased in love and enjoyment of GOD that it knows experimentally what this jubilation is, a knowledge never attained by the wise Plato, nor by the eloquent Demosthenes, but only by the pure and humble heart wherein GOD dwells. Now, seeing that GOD is the author of every joy and of all jubilation, what must that joy be of which He Himself is the cause? For assuredly, as GOD'S punishments, generally speaking, are proportionate to what GOD Himself is, so are GOD'S consolations likewise. If, then, His punishments are so heavy when He chastises, how great will His consolations be when He comforts! If His hand is so heavy when He lifts it to scourge, how gentle will it be when He stretches it forth to caress, especially as He is far more admirable in His acts of mercy than in those of justice!

Tell me, also, what is that "house of wine" into which the bride rejoicingly tells us that her Beloved brought her, when His banner over her was love? (Cant. ii. 4, margin.) And what is that banquet to which the Spouse Himself calls us, saying, "Eat, O Friends; drink, and be drunken with loves." (Cant. v. 1, margin.) What is this drunkenness, but the abundance of Divine sweetness, which so transports and ravishes the hearts of men, that they are as out of themselves? For we say that a man is drunken, when the wine that he has taken is more than he is able to digest; so that it gets into his head, and has such mastery over him, that he loses all power over himself, and is governed by the wine. Say, then, what must be the state of the soul when it is intoxicated with this heavenly wine, when it is so full of GOD and of His love that it cannot bear so great a burthen of joy, and that all its strength and capacity are insufficient to endure such great happiness? Thus it is written of S. Ephrem that he was often so mightily overcome by this wine of heavenly sweetness, that his mortal weakness being unable to bear such great joy, he was constrained to cry aloud to GOD, and say, "Depart from me a little, O LORD; for the weakness

of my body cannot endure the greatness of Thy delights." O marvellous goodness! O intense sweetness of our Supreme LORD, Who communicates Himself so liberally to His creatures, that the strength of their heart suffices not to endure the abundance of such great joy.

In this heavenly drunkenness all the powers of the soul slumber; it enjoys a sleep of peace and life; it rises above itself, it knows, and loves, and enjoys, beyond all its natural capacities. And thus, as water put over the fire, when it is very hot, seems to forget its own nature, which is heavy and tends downwards, and leaps up, imitating the lightness and nature of the fire that affects it, so the soul, inflamed with this heavenly fire, rises above itself, and striving to ascend with the spirit from earth to heaven, from whence this flame comes, boils with most ardent desire for GOD, and rushes with violent impulses to embrace Him, stretching up its arms on high to try to reach Him Whom it loves so much; and as it can neither reach Him, nor cease to desire Him, it faints with its longing, unfulfilled desire, and says with the bride in the Song of Songs, "Tell my Beloved that I am sick of love." (Cant. v. 8.) This sickness proceeds, the Saints tell us, from hindrances and delays in the fulfilment of this deep and earnest longing. But, says a holy Doctor, "Be not discouraged, O loving soul, for thy sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of GOD, that the Son of GOD may be glorified thereby." (S. John xi. 4.) But what tongue can tell the joys that pass between these lovers in that bed of Solomon, that was made "of the wood of Lebanon," with "pillars of silver, and the bottom thereof of gold?" (Cant. iii. 9, 10, margin.) This is the place of the spiritual espousals, and it is called a bed, because it is the place of rest, and love, and of perfect repose, of life-giving sleep, and of heavenly joys. And how great these are no man knoweth, saving He that receiveth them, as S. John says in the Revelation. (Rev. ii. 17.)

Yet these lack not signs and tokens whereby we may conjecture somewhat of this matter. For if we consider the unbounded love and goodness of the SON of GOD towards men, which led Him to suffer such strange shame and torments for them, can we marvel at this that we are now speaking of, which is but as

nothing in comparison? What will He not do for love of the just, Who has done so much both for the just and for the unjust? What caresses will He not bestow on His friends Who endured such sorrows both for His friends and enemies? We have some indication of this in the Song of Songs, wherein are written such kindness and caresses of the heavenly Bridegroom to His bride, which is the Church, and every soul that is in grace, and such sweet and loving words spoken by each to the other, that no eloquence or love in the world could feign greater ones.

We have a ground for conjecture also on the part of men, I mean, of righteous men, and true lovers of GOD. For if thou lookest into their heart, thou wilt find that their greatest desire, that which perpetually occupies the thoughts, is the consideration how they can serve GOD, and how they would make a thousand offerings of themselves, if it would in any way please Him Whom they so love, Him Who has done and Who does so much for them every day, Who comforts and treats them so kindly. Tell me, if man who is so disloyal a creature, and so incapable in himself of good, can keep such faith and loyalty towards GOD, what will He do for man Whose goodness, Whose charity, Whose faithfulness are infinitely great? If, as the Prophet says, GOD is "holy with the holy," and "perfect with the perfect," (Ps. xviii. 25,) and if the goodness of man is so great as this, how great will that of GOD be? If GOD enters into competition with the righteous in goodness, how far will He surpass them! Then if, as we have said, the righteous man who burns with love for GOD desires to be consumed in so many ways for GOD'S pleasure, what will GOD Himself do to comfort and refresh the righteous? This cannot be expressed, nor can it be understood; and therefore Isaiah the Prophet said that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him." And this, as S. Paul explains, is to be understood not only of the treasures of glory, but also of those of grace. (Isa. lxiv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.)

Thinkest thou now, my Brother, that this path of virtue is sufficiently provided with happiness? Thinkest thou that all the joys of worldly men can be compared with these? What

comparison can there be between light and darkness, or between CHRIST and Belial? What comparison can there be between the joys of earth and the joys of heaven? the joys of the flesh and the joys of the spirit? the joys of creatures and the joys of the Creator? For it is evident that the more noble and excellent a thing is, the more powerful it is to cause joy. Was not this the Prophet's meaning when he said, "A small thing that the righteous hath is better than great riches of the ungodly?" (Ps. xxxvii. 16.) And in another place, "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my GOD than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness?" (Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 11.) And what else did the bride mean in the Song of Songs, when she said, "Thy love is better than wine?" and again, further on, "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee; we will remember Thy love more than wine: the upright love Thee." (Cant. i. 2, 4.) That is, we will remember the most sweet comforts and refreshments wherewith Thou dost strengthen and console Thy spiritual children, which are better than wine; wine plainly signifying material wine, but all worldly pleasures, which "the great whore," spoken of in the Revelations, "that sitteth upon many waters, arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold," gives men to drink, and wherewith she makes all the inhabitants of Babylon drunk, and overturns their reason, that they may not perceive their own perdition.

To continue this subject; if thou askest wherein especial virtuous men enjoy the comfort we have spoken of, the LORD replies by the Prophet Isaiah, "The sons of the stranger, that join themselves unto the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the Name of the LORD; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer." (Isa. lvi. 6, 7.) Here we see that it is especially in this holy exercise that the LORD gladdens the hearts of His elect. For, as S. Laurence Guistiniani says, in prayer the heart of the righteous is set on fire with love of their Creator; therein at times they are lifted up above themselves, and they find themselves among the companies of the Angels; therein in the presence of their Creator they sing and love, they mourn and give praise, they weep and rejoice, they eat and are an hungered, they drink and

are athirst, and with all the power of their love they strive, LORD, to transform themselves into Thee, Whom they contemplate with faith, reverence with humility, seek with desire, and enjoy with charity. Therein they know by experience the meaning of those words, "That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves," (S. John xvii. 13), for this joy spreads itself like a river of peace over all the powers of the soul, enlightening the understanding, gladdening the will, gathering up the memory and all the thoughts to GOD; and then with arms of love they embrace and hold something within themselves, and know not what it is; but desire with all their might to hold it that it may not go. And as the Patriarch Jacob wrestled with the Angel, and would not let him go, (Gen. xxxii. 26), so does the heart in a manner wrestle with that divine sweetness to hinder it from going, because it finds in it all that it desires. And therefore it says with S. Peter on the mountain, "LORD, it is good for us to be here," (Matt. xvii. 4), let us abide here.

Now the soul understands all the loving language that is spoken in the Song of Songs, and sings all those sweet canticles in its own fashion, saying, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." (Cant. ii. 6.) And in the verse before, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." (Cant. ii. 5.) Now does the soul, burning with this divine flame, long with earnest desire to escape out of this prison; and while her departure is deferred, her tears are her food day and night. It longs for death, it endures life, continually saying the words of the bride, "Oh that Thou wert as my brother, as one that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find Thee without, I would kiss Thee." (Cant. viii. 1.) Then marvelling at itself, how such great treasures were hidden from it in times past, and seeing that all men are capable of so great a blessing, it longs to go out into all the streets and lanes, and cry aloud to men and say, "O fools! O madmen! Whither go ye? What seek ye? Why do ye not hasten to enjoy this great good? O taste and see how gracious the LORD is; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." (Ps. xxxiv. 8.) Now that it has tasted spiritual sweetness, all carnal pleasures are distasteful to it. Company is bondage, solitude it accounts a

paradise, its delight is to be with the LORD Whom it loves. Honours are a heavy burthen to it, and the charge of ruling house and property a cross. It would have its joys disturbed neither by heaven nor earth, and therefore it tries to keep its heart from cleaving to anything. It has but one love and one desire : it loves all things in One, and it loves One in all. It can say very truly with the Prophet, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but GOD is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Ps. lxxiii. 24, 25.)

Now its knowledge of sacred things no longer seems obscure, it sees them with other eyes ; for it feels changes and emotions in its heart which are strong arguments and testimonies to the truths of the Faith. The day is wearisome to it when it dawns with its cares, and it longs for the quiet night to spend it with GOD. No night seems long to it ; the longest it accounts the best. And if the night is clear, it lifts up its eyes to see the beauty of the skies, and the brightness of the moon and stars, and it sees these things with very different eyes, and very different joy. It looks on them as samples of its Creator's beauty, as mirrors of His glory, as interpreters and messengers bringing intelligence concerning Him, as living specimens of His graces and perfections, and as gifts and presents which the Bridegroom sends to His bride to win her love and engage her thoughts till the day when they are to take hands, and when the everlasting marriage will be celebrated in heaven. All the world is a book that ever speaks to it of GOD, a letter sent express by its Beloved, a long record and attestation of His love. These, my Brother, are the nights of the lovers of GOD ; this is the sleep that they sleep. Then, with the sweet and gentle sounds of the peaceful night, with the sweet music and harmony of creation, the soul enfolds itself within itself, and sleeps that waking sleep, of which it is said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." (Cant. v. 2.) And when the most sweet Spouse sees it sleeping in His arms, He guards that sleep of life, and says, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until she please." (Cant. iii. 5, Vulg.)

What thinkest thou of such nights, my Brother? Which are best, these, or those of the children of this world, who are employed at these hours in laying snares for some innocent maiden, to destroy her honour and her soul, burthened with a load of iron, with fears and suspicions, imperilling their souls, and treasuring up against themselves wrath "against the day of wrath," (Rom. ii. 5), and destruction?

It is possible that thou mayest answer all that I have said, by saying that these great favours are granted only to the perfect, and that it takes long to reach perfection. It is true that these blessings are for the perfect, but yet our LORD prevents beginners "with the blessings of goodness." (Ps. xxi. 3.) He feeds them first with sweet milk, as babes, and afterwards teaches them to eat bread with the crust. Dost not thou see what rejoicings were made at the return of the prodigal son, the feast, the feasters, the music that was heard all round? (S. Luke xv. 22-25.) What is this but a figure of the spiritual joy of the soul when it has come out of Egypt and finds itself free from Pharaoh's bondage and the devil's slavery? How can one who is thus freed fail to rejoice? How can he help calling on all creatures to help him in thanking his Deliverer, saying, "I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea." (Exod. xv. 1.)

If it were not thus, where would be the providence of GOD, Who provides for every creature most perfectly, according to its nature, its weakness, its age, and its capacity? For it is certain that men who are still carnal and worldly could not walk in this new way, and tread the world under their feet, if GOD did not give them such favours. And therefore it belongs to His divine providence, since He has determined to take them out of the world, to make the way so smooth for them that they may easily walk therein, and not be turned back by its difficulties. The way by which GOD led the children of Israel into the promised land is an evident figure of this. Moses writes thus concerning it, "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that GOD led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for GOD said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they

return to Egypt." (Exod. xiii. 7.) If GOD then used this providence in leading His people to the Promised Land, when He brought them out of Egypt, He will be no less careful in guiding those to heaven whom He designs to lead there, when He has brought them out of the world.

I would have thee know instead, that although the favours and comfort given to the perfect are very exalted, yet the compassion of our LORD for the little ones is so great, that, beholding their poverty, He Himself helps them in their first beginnings; and seeing that they are still surrounded by occasions of sin, and still have their passions unmortified, to give them victory over these, to detach them from the flesh, to wean them from the milk of the world, and to bind them to Himself with such strong bonds of love that they may never depart from Him; for all these purposes He provides them with such mighty comfort and joy, that though they are but beginners, it is like, in some degree, to the joy of the perfect. This GOD signified by those festivals in the Old Testament, of which He commanded that the first and last day should be kept with equal reverence and solemnity. (Lev. xxiii. 3, 7, 35, 36; Numb. xxviii. 18, 25.) The six days between were as week-days, but the first and last were distinguished from the rest, and were higher days. This is a likeness and figure of that whereof we speak. GOD will have a feast kept on the first day as well as on the last, to give us to understand that in conversion, which is their beginning, and in perfection, which is their end, our LORD makes a great feast to all His servants, considering in one case their deserts, and in the other their necessity, doing justice in one sort, and showing grace to the other; giving to the last what their virtue obtains for them, to the first what their need requires.

Trees are fairest to look upon when they are in blossom, and when the fruit is ripening. The day of betrothal, and that of wedding, are days of especial festivity. In the beginnings our LORD betroths Himself to the soul, and as He takes His bride without a dowry, He makes the feast at His own cost; and therefore the feast is not according to the bride's deserving, but to the Bridegroom's wealth, being entirely provided by Him:

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wherefore He says, "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts," (Cant. viii. 8,) so that her child must be nourished by another's milk. Therefore also the bride says to her Bridegroom, "The little maidens love Thee much." (Cant. i. 2, Vulg.) He says not the virgins, that is, the souls that are established in virtue, but those of tender age, those who are beginning to open their eyes to the new light; these, she says, "love Thee much." For beginners ordinarily feel at first great emotions of love, as S. Thomas declares in one of his smaller works. He says, too, that one reason of this is the newness of their state, of their love, of the light and knowledge of divine things, which now they have, and which they had not hitherto. For the novelty of this knowledge causes in them great admiration, together with very sweet affection and gratitude to Him Who has given them so much good, and brought them out of such darkness. When a man is newly come to some great and famous city, or to some royal palace, he is at first astonished and amazed at the novelty and beauty of the things that he sees; but when he has seen them often, the pleasure and admiration with which he looked on them diminish. Something like this befalls those who have just entered this new region of grace, by reason of the novelty of the things that they discover there. Therefore it is no marvel that the newly devout sometimes feel greater fervour in their souls than those who have continued longer, because the recently obtained light and sense of Divine things excites them more. And this is the cause of what S. Bernard remarked, that the elder brother of the prodigal spake not untruly, when he complained of his kind father, saying that he had served him many years without transgressing his commandment at any time, and yet he had not received such great favours as the spendthrift received when he returned home. (S. Luke xv.) New love works, too, at the beginning like new wine, and the kettle boils over as soon as it feels the flame, and begins to experience the new and unaccustomed heat of the fire: the heat is stronger and quieter afterwards, but at the beginning it is more fervent.

The LORD gives a very good reception to those who are newly come into His house. At first they eat at their pleasure; everything is made easy to them. The LORD deals with them

like a merchant, who gives away the first specimen of his goods freely, but sells the rest for its just price. The love that people have for their little children is not greater than that they have for the elder ones, but it is tenderer and more caressing. The little ones are carried, the others walk; the bigger ones are made to work, the little ones are carefully spared all fatigue, and, without their seeking for food, they are often coaxed to eat it, and it is even put in their mouths.

From this kind treatment of the LORD, and from these well-known favours, arises that spiritual joy of beginners of which the Prophet said, "The springing plant rejoices with the drops from above." (Ps. lxxv. 11, Vulg.) What is this young plant, what are these drops, but the dew of Divine grace that waters the spiritual plant newly removed from the world into the garden of the LORD? Of these the Prophet says that they will rejoice with the drops that fall from above, to signify the great joy that they receive with the first-fruits of this heavenly visitation. And think not, because these favours are called drops, that their effect is little like their name; for, as S. Augustine says, if any man drink of the river of Paradise, one drop of which is greater than the whole ocean, that drop alone would suffice to quench all the thirst in the world.

Nor is it any argument against this to say that thou feelest none of this joy and comfort although thou thinkest upon GOD. For a palate depraved by disease cannot judge well of tastes, because bitter things seem sweet to it, and sweet things bitter; and what marvel is it that thou whose soul is depraved by the diseases of so many inordinate affections and vices, and so accustomed to the flesh-pots of Egypt, shouldst loathe the Heavenly Manna, the Bread of Angels? Purge thy palate by the tears of penitence, and when it is purged and cleansed it will be able to taste and see how sweet the LORD is. (Ps. xxxiv. 8.)

Tell me now, Brother, what good things are there in this world that are better than dross in comparison with this? The Saints speak of two kinds of blessedness, one perfect, the other imperfect; the perfect is enjoyed by the saints in glory, the imperfect by the righteous in this life. What canst thou desire better than to begin thy blessedness at once, to receive here the

betrothal-gifts of those Divine espousals, which will be celebrated there by words of performance, and which are begun here by words of promise? O man, says Richard of S. Victor, since thou art allowed to live in such a paradise, and to enjoy such a treasure, go and sell all that thou hast, and buy it, (S. Matt. xiii. 46); it will not cost thee dear, for CHRIST is the Merchant man, and He gives it almost for nought. Do not put it off to another time, for one instant lost now is worth more than all the treasures in the world. For if it were given thee afterwards, I know assuredly that thou wouldst sorrow greatly all thy life for what thou hadst lost, and wouldst say, with S. Augustine, "Too late loved I Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late loved I Thee." This saint continually bewailed the delay of his conversion, although he lost not the crown; beware lest thou have to lament for everything, losing at once the gifts of glory which the saints enjoy in the life to come, and those of grace, which the righteous possess in this life.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*Of the Fifth Privilege of Virtue, namely, the Comfort of a Good Conscience, which the Righteous enjoy; and of the Inward Torments and Remorse of the Wicked.*

TO the joy of the Comfort of the HOLY GHOST is added another joy that the righteous have in the testimony of a good conscience. To understand the nature and dignity of this privilege thou must know that GOD'S providence, which provides all creatures with all that is necessary for their preservation and perfection, desires the perfection of His rational creatures, and has provided them sufficiently with all that is requisite. And because the perfection of these creatures consists in the perfection of their understanding and of their will, which are the two chief powers of the soul, and which are perfected respectively by knowledge and by virtue, He has created in the understanding the universal principles of all sciences, from which their conclusions proceed; and in the will He has created the seed of all virtues, giving it a natural inclination to all good and an abhorrence of all evil. Thus it naturally rejoices in the one and is sad and discontented with the other. And this inclination is so natural and so powerful, that although a long habit of sin may weaken and enfeeble it, it can never be entirely extinguished and destroyed, in this resembling our free-will, which may grow weak and feeble, but is never altogether dead. In figure of this we read that in all the losses and calamities of holy Job, there always remained one servant, who escaped from the destruction, and came to tell him. (Job i. 15-19.) In like manner, to one who sins there ever remains

this servant, called by the learned the synderesis of conscience, escaped when all besides are lost, and alive when they are dead ; and this continually represents to the wicked man the good that he lost when he sinned, and the wretched state into which he has fallen.

And herein the care of GOD's providence and His love for virtue shine forth marvellously ; for He has provided us with a continual alarm that never wearies, a perpetual preacher who is never silent, a tutor and preceptor who always points the way towards goodness. Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, understood this wonderfully well ; he says, that as parents entrust their children while they are little to a tutor who is carefully to keep them from vice and lead them to virtue, so GOD our FATHER has given us this natural virtue which we call conscience as a tutor, that it might continually teach and guide us into all good, and accuse and reproach us when we do evil.

Now, as conscience is the tutor and preceptor of the good, so is it the torment and scourge of the wicked, inwardly accusing and lashing them for the evils that they do, and mixing bitterness with all their pleasures, so that they can scarce taste the onions of Egypt before the tears start into their eyes. And this is one of the punishments with which GOD threatens the wicked by Isaiah, saying, that He will make Babylon a possession for the hedgehog. (Isa. xiv. 23, "bittern," E. V.) For by the just judgment of GOD the heart of the wicked, which is here signified by Babylon, is made a possession to hedgehogs, which signify devils, and signify also the pricking stings and remorse of conscience which sins bring with them, and which torment and pierce the heart like very sharp pricks. If thou wouldst know what these pricks are, I say that one is the very loathsomeness and hideousness of sin, which is of itself so abominable that a philosopher has said, that if he knew that the gods would forgive it, and that men would never suspect it, he would not dare commit a sin because of its loathsomeness. Another prick is when it injures some one, for then it is like the shedding of Abel's blood, which cried to GOD for vengeance. (Gen. iv. 10.) And thus it is written in the First Book of Maccabees, that the grievous wrongs and injuries which Antiochus the king had done at

Jerusalem presented themselves to his mind, and so troubled and grieved him that he was sick unto death. And before he died he said, "I remember the evils that I did at Jerusalem, and that I took all the vessels of gold and silver that were therein, and sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judea without a cause. I perceive therefore that for this cause these troubles are come upon me, and behold, I perish through great grief in a strange land." (1 Mac. vi. 12, 13.) Another prick is the infamy that follows from the sin itself, of which the wicked man cannot be unconscious, and which cannot be a matter of indifference to him; for men naturally desire to be liked, and dislike being ill thought of, since, as a wise man has said, "There is no greater torment in the world than to be generally hated."

Another prick is the fear of death, and uncertainty of life; the dread of judgment and the horror of everlasting punishment; for each of these is a prick that sharply wounds and pierces the heart of the wicked, so that, as often as the remembrance of death, so certain on the one hand, so uncertain on the other, presents itself to him, it is "bitter," as the son of Sirach says, (Ecclus. xli. 1), because he sees that on that day his crimes will be recompensed, and his vices and pleasures ended; and this remembrance no man can put away from him, for there is nothing more natural to mortals than to die. And therefore, whenever any indisposition attacks him, he is full of fears and alarms, questioning if he shall die or live, for the vehemence of self-love and the passion of fear make him afraid of shadows, and fill him with causeless terrors. If pestilence and mortality are in the world, if there are earthquakes, or thunder and lightning, he is troubled and distressed with the terrors of his evil conscience, imagining that they may be all on his account.

Now, all these pricks at once torment and pierce the heart of the wicked, as is described at great length by one of the friends of holy Job, whose words I will quote here to make this doctrine more evident: "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of his years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears;" that is, the voice of his evil conscience, which is always biting and accusing him. "In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him;" for, however

peaceful and prosperous his life may be, the troubled conscience will be full of fears and terrors. "He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness;" that is, he does not think it possible to escape from the darkness of the wretched state in which he is living, and to attain to the calmness and tranquillity of a good conscience, which is a lovely light that gladdens and illumines all the inmost parts of the soul. "And he is waited for of the sword. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it?" Whereas men ordinarily rejoice at their meal-times, he is even then filled with fear, distrust, and terror. "He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand;" that is, the day of death, of judgment, and of everlasting doom. "Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to battle." (Job xv. 20-24.) Thus the friends of Job describe the cruel tortures that are in the hearts of these men; for, as a philosopher has truly said, "By an eternal law of GOD fear always pursues the wicked." And to this agree the words of Solomon, who says, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion!" (Prov. xxviii. 1.)

S. Augustine comprehends all this in few words, saying, "LORD, Thou hast commanded, and truly it is so, that the disordered soul is a torment to itself." And this is the case with all things. For what is there in the world that is not restless and discontented as soon as it is out of order? When a bone is out of its joint and its natural place, what pain does it cause! When an element is out of its centre, what violence does it suffer! When the humours of the human body are out of the natural proportion and correspondence that they ought to have, what sicknesses do they occasion! Then, if it is so fit and due a thing for the rational creature to live an orderly and reasonable life, when the life is disorderly and unreasonable must not the nature of that creature suffer and complain? Holy Job said very well, "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" (Job ix. 4.) On which words S. Gregory says, that as GOD created things wondrously, so He disposed them in a very orderly manner, that they might be preserved and continue in existence. From whence it follows that those who resist the ordinance appointed by the Creator destroy the

peace and harmony that were its result, because nothing that departs from GOD'S ordinance can rest in quietness. Therefore those who lived in peace and order whilst they obeyed GOD, when they ceased to obey lost not only order but peace. This is seen plainly in the first man, and in the angel that fell, who lost peace and happiness by doing their own will, disobeying GOD'S orders, and disregarding His appointment, (Gen. iii. 6 ; Isa. xiv. 13, 14) ; whilst man, who was master of himself as long as he obeyed, found war and rebellion within himself on his disobedience. (Rom. vii. 23.)

This then is the torment in which the wicked live by the just judgment of GOD, and this is one of the greatest miseries that they suffer in this life. All the saints declare it. S. Ambrose says in his Book of Offices, "What pain can be greater than the inward pain of a hurt conscience? Is it not an evil more to be dreaded than loss of property, exile, sickness, or suffering?" S. Isidore says, "A man can flee from everything except himself; for wherever he goes the torment of a bad conscience accompanies him." In another place he says, "There is no pain greater than that of a bad conscience; therefore, if thou wouldst avoid unhappiness, live a good life." And so true is this, that it is acknowledged even by the heathen philosophers, who knew nothing of the punishments which our faith assures us are destined for the wicked. Thus Seneca says, "What does it profit to hide from the sight and hearing of men? A good conscience calls on the whole world to behold; but a bad conscience is anxious and troubled even in solitude. If what thou doest is good, let it be known to all; if it is evil, what avails it that others are ignorant of it, if thou knowest it thyself? O wretched man that thou art, if thou despisest this witness, thy own conscience is equal to a thousand witnesses." He says in another place that the greatest possible punishment for a crime is to have committed it. And this he repeats elsewhere, saying, "Thou shouldst fear for no witness of thy sins more than thyself; for thyself is the only one from whom thou canst not flee; and most surely wickedness is its own punishment." Tully says in one of his orations, "The power of conscience is great both ways; therefore those are fearless who have done nothing



amiss, whilst those who have done wrong live in continual terror."

This then is one of the torments that the wicked suffer perpetually ; it begins in this life, and will continue in the next. It is the worm that "shall not die," whereof Isaiah speaks, (Isa. lvi. 24), and it shall gnaw and torment the consciences of the wicked for ever. (S. Mark ix. 44, 46, 48 ; Ecclus. vii. 17.) And S. Isidore says that "one deep calleth another," (Ps. xlii. 9), when the wicked pass from the judgment of their conscience to the judgment of everlasting damnation.

The righteous are free from this cruel torment and suffering, for they have none of these pricks and stings of conscience, and they enjoy the sweet flowers and fruits of virtue, which the HOLY GHOST plants in their souls, as in an earthly paradise, a garden inclosed wherein He takes His pleasure. S. Augustine uses this expression, writing on Genesis, where he says, "The joy of a good conscience possessed by a good man is paradise. Wherefore the Church in those of her members who live righteously, piously, and temperately, is fitly called a paradise, adorned with abundance of graces and purest pleasures." In his Book On instructing the ignorant, he says, "Thou art seeking for the true rest that is promised to Christians after death : be assured that thou wilt find it also amid the bitterest afflictions of life, if thou lovest the commands of Him Who promised it, for thou wilt very soon know by experience how much sweeter the fruits of righteousness are than those of iniquity, and thou wilt rejoice more truly and more sweetly with a good conscience in the midst of tribulation, than with a bad one amid pleasures." These are the words of S. Augustine, and by these thou mayest understand that the joy of a good conscience is so great that even as honey not only is sweet itself, but sweetens sour things that are mixed with it, so a good conscience is so joyful a thing that all the troubles of life are joyful with it. And as we have said that the very hideousness and enormity of sin torments the wicked, so the beauty and dignity of virtue in itself comforts the good, as David the Prophet plainly signified, when he said, "The judgments of the LORD," that is, His holy commandments, "are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are

they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Ps. xix. 9, 10.) And he greatly rejoiced in keeping them, as he has testified in another Psalm, saying, "I have had as great delight in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all manner of riches." (Ps. cxix. 14.) And Solomon his son confirms this in his Proverbs, saying, "It is joy to the just to do judgment," (Prov. xxi. 15,) which is the same as doing virtuously, and fulfilling all the obligations that are laid upon him. And although there are many causes of this joy, the chief of all is the very dignity and beauty of virtue, which, as Plato says, are inestimable. In truth, the fruit and the pleasure of a good conscience are such, that S. Ambrose declares in his Book of Offices that the happiness of the righteous in this life consists in it ; for he speaks thus, "So great is the brightness of virtue that a tranquil conscience, and the security of innocence, suffice to make life happy."

And as the philosophers who lacked the light of faith knew the torment of a bad conscience, they knew also the joy of a good one, as Tully shows in the Book of the Tusculan Questions, where he speaks thus : "A life spent in noble and honourable occupations brings with it such comfort, that they who so live are insensible to afflictions, or regard them as trifles." He says elsewhere that there is no theatre more public, or more honourable to virtue, than the testimony of a good conscience. When Socrates was asked who could live without suffering, he replied, "The man who lives a good life." And Bias, another renowned philosopher, being asked what living man was free from fear, answered, "He that has a good conscience." And Seneca writes thus in a letter, "A wise man's life is never joyless, and his joy proceeds from a good conscience." This agrees with the words of Solomon, "All the days of the afflicted are evil," that is, toilsome and painful ; "but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." (Prov. xv. 15.) More could not be said in so few words, which tell us that as a man at a feast enjoys the variety of dishes, and the company of the friends who share it, so the righteous man enjoys the testimony of a good conscience, and the sweet odour of GOD'S presence, of which he has great signs and tokens in his soul. But the difference is this, that the

pleasure of the feast is earthly and brutish, but that of a good conscience is perpetual ; that one begins with hunger, and ends with satiety ; and the other begins with a good life, continues with perseverance, and ends in glory. Now if the philosophers so highly esteemed this joy, though unconnected with hopes for the next life, how far more will the Christian rejoice, knowing what great rewards GOD has laid up for him in the life to come, and also in the present. And though this testimony ought not to be devoid of a holy and religious fear, that fear does not dismay, but rather marvellously encourages us ; for it silently assures us that our trust is more healthy and legitimate, because confidence unaccompanied by this holy fear would not be trust, but presumption and false security.

Here, then, my Brother, is another privilege enjoyed by the faithful, of which the Apostle says, " Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of GOD, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.)

This is what can be expressed in words of this privilege. But words are no more able to declare its excellence to one who has not experienced it, than they are to explain the flavour of an exquisite dish to one who has not tasted it. For this joy is so great, that often when a righteous man is in sorrow and trouble, when he looks on every side and sees nothing to comfort him, he turns his eyes inward, and beholding the peace of his conscience, and considering its testimony, he takes courage and comfort, for he knows well that whatever may befall him, this is the only thing of importance. And although, as I have said, he cannot have perfect security of this, yet, as the sun, before it rises in the morning, illumines the world with its approaching brightness, so a good conscience, although it attain not to absolute certainty, yet gladdens the soul by the light of its testimony. And so true is this, that S. Chrysostom speaks these words, " All superfluity of sorrow, falling into a good conscience, is extinguished like a spark of fire falling into a very deep lake."

## CHAPTER XVII.

*Of the Sixth Privilege of Virtue, namely, the Hope and Trust in God's Mercy that the Righteous enjoy, and of the Vain and Miserable Confidence of the Wicked.*

TO the joy of a good conscience is added that of hope and trust which the righteous possess, and of which the Apostle speaks, when he counsels us to be "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," (Rom. xii. 12,) because hope tells us that GOD is our help and rewarder in all our troubles. This is one of the great treasures of a Christian life, this is the patrimony, this the Indies of the children of GOD, and this is their harbour and refuge in all the miseries of life.

But lest we deceive ourselves, it is to be noted here, that, as there are two sorts of faith, a dead faith that does no living works, which is that of bad Christians, (Jas. ii. 17,) and a living faith that "worketh by love," (Gal. v. 6,) which is that of the righteous, who do living works; so are there also two kinds of hope, a dead hope, which neither gives life to the soul, nor refreshes and strengthens it in its works, and "a lively hope," as S. Peter calls it, (1 Pet. i. 3,) which, having life, has also the properties of life, animating, comforting, gladdening, and strengthening us on the way to heaven, and giving us courage and confidence amid the troubles of the world, as it is written of the blessed Susanna, that when she was already condemned to die, as she was led through the public streets to be stoned, her heart was strengthened, and trusted in the LORD. (History of Susanna, 41-45.) And such also was David's confidence, when he said, "O think upon Thy servant, as concerning Thy

word, wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust. The same is my comfort in my trouble." (Ps. cxix. 49, 50.)

This lively hope produces many admirable effects in the soul wherein it dwells, and these are greater in proportion as it partakes more in the charity and love of GOD, which give it life. (1 John iii. 14, 19.) The first of these effects is to encourage man in the path of virtue by the hope of reward ; for the surer pledges he has of this, the more joyfully does he pass through the troubles of the world, as all the saints testify with one voice. S. Gregory says, "The virtue of hope so lifts up our heart to the joys of eternity, that it hinders us from feeling the ills of this mortal state." Origen says, "The hope of future glory refreshes those who labour for it in this life, as the hope of a crown mitigates the pain of the wounds received by a soldier in war." S. Ambrose says, "A sure hope of reward makes labours invisible, and conceals dangers." S. Jerome says, "All toil becomes light when we highly value its payment, and thus the hope of reward diminishes the burthen of labour." S. Chrysostom explains this even more fully in these words, "If the dreadful waves of the sea dismay not the sailors, nor winter rains and storms the husbandmen, nor wounds and death soldiers, nor blows and falls wrestlers, when they fix their eyes on the deceitful hope of gain, far less should they regard labours who hope for the kingdom of GOD. Consider not, then, O Christian, that the way of virtue is hard, but look whereto it leads ; nor think that the path of vice is sweet, but remember its end." The saint speaks very well. For who would willingly walk in a path of roses and flowers that ends in death ? Or who would refuse a rough and difficult road that ends in life ?

But hope serves not for the obtaining of this desired end alone, but also of all the means required for that end, and avails us in all the miseries and necessities of this life. For by hope man is helped in trouble, defended in peril, comforted in sorrow, assisted in infirmity, provided for in necessity ; since hope obtains for him the favour and mercy of GOD, which does all things for us. We have plain testimonies and assurances of this in the whole of Divine Scripture, especially in David's Psalms, for there is hardly a Psalm to be found that does not

magnify this virtue, and declare its fruits ; so that they are one of the greatest treasures and comforts that the righteous have in this life. Wherefore I must not be accounted tedious if I set down some of them ; for indeed I pass over many more than I am able to give here. In the Second Book of Chronicles a Prophet said to Asa the king, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of him whose heart is perfect toward Him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) Jeremiah saith, "The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lam. iii. 25.) And in Nahum, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble ; and He knoweth them that trust in Him, (Nah. i. 7) ; that is, He thinks of them to help and succour them. Isaiah saith, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. (Isa. xxx. 15.) By quietness he means an inward peace and rest of the soul in the midst of affliction, proceeding from hope, which casts out all inordinate anxiety and carefulness, looking for help from GOD'S mercy.

Again, the son of Sirach has said, "Ye that fear the LORD, believe Him ; and your reward shall not fail. Ye that fear the LORD, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy. Look at the generations of old, and see ; did ever any trust in the LORD, and was confounded ?" (Ecclus. ii. 8-10.) Solomon says in his Proverbs, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 5, 6.) David the Prophet says in a Psalm, "They that know Thy Name shall put their trust in Thee ; for Thou, LORD, hast never failed them that seek Thee." (Ps. ix. 10.) In another he says, "My trust hath been in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy." (Ps. xxxi. 7, 8.) In another, "He that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about." (Ps. xxxii. 10, Bible Version.) And he well says "shall compass him," to show that it will guard him on every side, even as a king is guarded by his soldiers, that he may be quite secure. And in another Psalm he draws this out at greater length, saying, "I waited patiently for the LORD ; and He inclined unto me, and heard my calling. He brought me also out of the horrible pit,

out of the mire and clay ; and set my feet upon the Rock, and ordered my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our GOD. Many shall see it, and fear ; and shall put their trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man that hath set his hope in the LORD, and turned not unto the proud, and to such as go about with lies." (Ps. xl. 1-5.) By which words thou wilt perceive another marvellous effect of this virtue, which is to open a man's eyes and mouth so that he may know by experience the Fatherly kindness and tender guardianship GOD has for him, and sing unto Him a new song, with new joy and delight, for the new benefit received in the help he had hoped for.

But we might almost be for ever quoting verses, and even whole Psalms of this kingly Prophet. For the whole of the 125th Psalm, "They that put their trust in the LORD shall be even as the Mount Sion," is on this subject. And all the 91st, "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High," tells of the profit and advantage that they have who hope in GOD, and live under His protection. On some words of this Psalm, "Thou, LORD, art my hope," S. Bernard writes thus : "In whatever I may have to do or to leave undone, to suffer, or to desire, Thou, LORD, art my hope. This is the cause of the fulfilment of Thy promises ; this is the great reason and foundation of my hope. Let one man plead his virtues, and boast that he has borne the burden and heat of the day, (S. Matt. xx. 12) ; let another say with the Pharisee that he fasts twice in the week, and that he is not as other men are, (S. Luke xix. 11, 12) ; I, LORD, will say with the Prophet, 'It is good for me to hold me fast by GOD, to put my trust in the LORD GOD.' (Ps. lxxiii. 27.) If rewards are promised me by Thee, I will hope to obtain them ; though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Thee ; though the world rage against me, though the devil roar, though the flesh itself rise up against the spirit, my hope shall be in Thee." (Ps. xxvii. 2, 3.) Why do we not then cast away at once all vain and deceitful hopes, and cleave with the utmost fervour and devotion to this sure hope ? The same Saint afterwards says further, "Faith, saith GOD, has prepared great and inestimable good things for His faithful servants.

Hope, saith He, is keeping them for me. But not content with this, she causes Charity to say, I will therefore make haste to enjoy them."

Behold then, Brother, how great is the fruit of this virtue; and for how many things it is profitable. It is like a sure haven to which the righteous have recourse in the time of the tempest. It is like a storehouse of bread in the time of famine, where all the poor and needy come to ask for help. It is the tabernacle and shadow that GOD promises by Isaiah to His elect, "for a place of refuge, and for a covert" against the summer heat, and against the storm and rain of winter, (Isa. iv. 6); that is, against the prosperities and adversities of the world. Lastly, it is a general medicine and remedy for all our ills; for it is certain that all that we justly, faithfully, and wisely hope of GOD we shall obtain, if it is good for us. Wherefore S. Cyprian says that the mercy of GOD is the fount of healing, hope is the vessel that receives it, and that the benefit received will be in proportion to the size of the vessel, for the water of mercy can never fail from that fount. So that, as GOD told the children of Israel that every place that the sole of their foot should tread upon should be theirs, (Josh. i. 3), so all the mercy on which a man sets the foot of his hope shall be his. And therefore he who by the inspiration of GOD hopes for all things shall obtain all. And this hope is an imitation of the virtue and power of GOD, and redounds to GOD'S glory. For, as S. Bernard very truly says, nothing so greatly declares the omnipotence of GOD as our seeing that He not only is almighty, but makes those in a manner almighty who hope in Him. For did not he partake in this omnipotence who, being on earth, commanded the sun to stand still in heaven? (Josh. x. 12); and he who gave King Hezekiah his choice whether he should command that sun to go forward or to return back? (2 Kings xx. 9.) This is the thing that most magnifies GOD'S glory, His giving such power to His servants. The proud Assyrian king gloried in having princes to serve him, who were kings like himself, (Dan. i. 3-7; ii. 48, 49), how much more may our LORD GOD glory, and say that those who serve Him are in a manner gods, (Ps. lxxxii. 6), since they so partake in His power.

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This, then, is the treasure of hope which the righteous enjoy, and which is lacking to the wicked ; for although these have hope, it is not a lively, but a dead hope, for sin has taken away its life, and therefore it produces not in them the effects of which we have spoken. For nothing more quickens hope than a good conscience, and one of the things that most dismays and destroys it is a bad one, which, as we have said, dreads the light of day, and is fearful and distrustful, knowing that it does not deserve, but has forfeited the help of GOD'S grace. And therefore, as the shadow follows the body wherever it goes, so do fear and distrust everywhere accompany a bad conscience. And their happiness and confidence are alike ; for, as their joy is in earthly things, so in them is their trust, for in them they glory, and to them they have recourse in time of trouble. And of this hope it is written in the Book of Wisdom, "The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind ; like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm ; like as the smoke that is dispersed here and there with a tempest." (Wisd. v. 14.) See how vain is this confidence.

But it is even worse than this ; for it is not only vain, but also hurtful and deceitful, as the LORD declares by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, "Woe to the rebellious children that take counsel, but not of Me ; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin : that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth ; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt ! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach." (Isa. xxx. 1-3, 5.) These are the words of Isaiah, and he is not content with them, but repeats his reproof in the following chapter, saying, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help ; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many ; and in horsemen, because they are very strong ; but they look not unto the HOLY ONE of Israel, neither seek the LORD ! Now the Egyptians are men, and not GOD ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out His

hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." (Isa. xxxi. 1, 3.)

Behold the difference between the hope of the righteous and that of the wicked ; one is flesh, and the other spirit ; or, if that be little, one is man, and the other GOD ; and the difference there is between GOD and man there is between one hope and the other. Wherefore, with good reason, the Prophet turns us from the last hope, and calls us to the other, saying, " O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man ; for there is no help in them. For when the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth, and then all his thoughts perish. Blessed is he that hath the GOD of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the LORD his GOD, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is." (Ps. cxlvi. 2-5.) Seest thou the difference between these two hopes? And, in another Psalm, the same Prophet declares this difference, saying, " Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses ; but we will remember the Name of the LORD our GOD. They are brought down, and fallen ; but we are risen, and stand upright." (Ps. xx. 7, 8.) Look how well the fruit of each confidence corresponds with its foundation ; one leads to a fall, the other to exaltation and victory.

With good reason, therefore, are the wicked compared in the gospel to the " man who built his house upon the sand," so that it fell at the very first tempest that arose, " and great was the fall of it ;" and the righteous to one who built his house upon a rock, where it stood firm and safe amid all the floods and winds of this life. (S. Matt. vii. 24-27.) Jeremiah the Prophet no less carefully declares this difference by a very beautiful comparison in these words, " Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited." But of the righteous man he goes on to speak thus : " Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is ; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when

heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green ; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jer. xvii. 5-8.) These are the words of the Prophet. Tell me, I pray thee, what more could be needed, if men had sense, to show the difference that hope alone makes between the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked, and between the prosperity of the two? What greater good can befall a tree than to be planted as the Prophet here pictures it? Such is the state of the righteous man, with whom all things go prosperously, because he is planted by the rivers of the water of Divine grace. On the other hand, there can be no worse lot for a tree than to be unfruitful and barren, and planted in a desert land, out of the sight and cultivation of men ; and from this the wicked may learn that there can be no more miserable state in this life than to have their eyes and heart turned away from GOD, Who is "the Fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13), and fixed on the support of frail and deceitful creatures, which is the desert, dry, and uninhabited country. It shows thee, too, how pitiable is the state of the worldling, who is planted in so bad a land, and whose hope rests on so feeble a basis, and, instead of hope, is but confusion and deceit.

Tell me, I pray thee, what greater wretchedness can there be than this? What greater poverty than to live without this hope? For if sin made man so poor and naked as we said above (Chap. V.), and the hope of GOD'S mercy was so necessary for his cure, what can become of him when this anchor, on which he rested, is broken? All other creatures are born perfect after their kind, and provided with all that is necessary for their life. But man by sin was half unmade, so that he has in himself hardly any of the things that he needs, but all must come to him as a free gift, and as alms from the hand of GOD'S mercy. Deprived of this, what can his life be, but halt, and maimed, and full of a thousand defects? What is living without hope, but living without GOD? What remains to man of his ancient patrimony to live upon without this help? What nation is there in the world so barbarous that it has no knowledge of GOD, and does not honour Him with some sort of honour, and hope for some good from His Providence? When

Moses departed for a little time from the children of Israel, they thought that they were without GOD (Exod. xxxii.), and being yet gross and ignorant they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, "Up, make us gods," for they dared not journey without any. And here we see that human nature, although it does not always know the True GOD, knows that it has need of GOD; and although it knows not why it is weak, it knows its weakness; and therefore it naturally seeks for GOD to remedy it. Just as ivy seeks the support of a tree to climb upwards, because it cannot rise of itself; and as a woman naturally seeks the support and protection of a man, because she is an imperfect being, and feels her need of that protection; so human nature, being poor and needy, seeks the help and protection of GOD. What then must be the life of men who live in a dreary widowhood and separation from GOD.

I should like to know of those who live thus, who comforts them in their troubles? to whom do they have recourse in their perils? who heals their sicknesses? to whom do they tell their sorrows? with whom do they take counsel in their affairs? of whom do they ask help in their necessities? with whom do they converse? with whom do they live? to whom do they talk? with whom do they lie down? and with whom do they rise up? how, in short, do they pass through all the trials of life deprived of this resource? If a body cannot live without the soul how can a soul live without GOD? for GOD is no less necessary for the spiritual than the soul for the natural life. And if, as we said before, a lively hope is the anchor of our life, how can any one dare to enter into the gulf of this tempestuous world without the help of that anchor? And if we said that hope is the shield with which we defend ourselves against the enemy, how do men go without this shield into the midst of so many enemies? If hope is the staff that sustains human nature in its universal sickness, what will become of weak men without the support of that staff?

We have now sufficiently declared the difference between the hope of the righteous and that of the wicked, and consequently the difference in their lot; for the righteous have GOD for their

Defender and Protector, and the wicked have the staff of a reed, even Egypt; "whereon if a man lean, it will" break, and "go into his hand, and pierce it." (Isa. xxxvi. 6.) For the fault that man commits in putting his trust in such things, is enough to make GOD cure it and open his eyes by a fall, as he signified by Jeremiah, who thus prophesied of the destruction of Moab and of its cause. "Because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken, and Chemosh," the god in whom thou trustest, "shall go forth into captivity, with his priests and his princes together." (Jer. xlviii. 7.) See what manner of help this is; to trust in it and to seek it is to lose it.

Let this suffice concerning the privilege of hope, which may seem to be the same with GOD'S especial providence over His servants, of which we spoke above, but which differs from it as an effect differs from its cause. For hope has many foundations and causes, amongst others, the goodness and truth of GOD, and the merits of CHRIST; and one of the chief of them is this Fatherly providence on which the hope rests. For the knowledge that GOD thus cares for us, gives us confidence.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Of the Seventh Privilege of Virtue, namely, the True Liberty which the Righteous enjoy : and of the Miserable and Unconscionable Slavery in which the Wicked live.*

FROM all the privileges spoken of above, and especially from the second and the fourth, the grace of the HOLY GHOST, and the Divine consolations, follows another and a marvellous privilege enjoyed by the righteous—true liberty of soul, which the SON of GOD brought into the world, for which cause He is called the Redeemer of the human race ; because He redeemed it from the wretched bondage wherein it was held, and brought it into true liberty. This is one of the good things that our LORD brought into the world, one of the greatest benefits of the gospel, and one of the chief effects of the HOLY GHOST, for where that SPIRIT is, “there,” as the Apostle says, “is liberty.” (2 Cor. iii. 17.) Finally, this is one of the great rewards that are promised in this life to the servants of GOD, as the LORD Himself promised some who desired to enter on His service, saying, “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” And when they answered Him, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free ? JESUS answered them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the SON abideth ever. If the SON therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (S. John viii. 31-36.)

In these words the LORD gives us plainly to understand that there are two kinds of liberty, one false and apparent, the other true and real. Their liberty is false whose bodies are free while their soul is captive and subject to the tyranny of its passions and its sins; such was that of Alexander the Great, who was master of the world, and a slave to his vices. But true liberty is that of those whose souls are free from all these tyrants, whether the body be free or in bonds; and such was that of S. Paul the Apostle, who was bound with a chain, but in spirit was caught up into heaven, and by his instructions and his epistles gave freedom to the world.

The reason why we call this plainly liberty, and give not that name to the other is, that the soul being incomparably the noblest, and well-nigh the whole of the two parts whereof man is composed, and the body being only the matter, subject, or case wherein the soul is enclosed, it follows that he ought, in truth, to be called free, in whom this chief part is at liberty; and his is but a false freedom, whose soul is in bondage, while the body goes wherever it will, free from bonds.

And if thou askest to whom such a man is in bondage, I reply, to the most loathsome, hideous, and abominable tyrant that can be imagined—namely, Sin. For the most abominable thing in the world is the torment of hell; but worse, and more abominable, is sin, the cause of that torment. And the wicked are slaves and servants to this, as was plainly shown in the LORD'S words given above: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (S. John viii. 34.) What bondage can be more wretched than this?

And not only is he the servant of sin, but also the chief seducers and tempters to sin—namely, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, corrupted by that sin, with all the lusts that proceed from it. For whoever is the slave of a son, is the slave also of the parents who begat him; and we know that these three are the fathers of sin. And, therefore, they are called the enemies of the soul, because they do it such great evil, bringing it into bondage, and giving it over to the power of that hateful tyrant.

And though all the three with one accord unite in this, yet

there is a difference. For the two first make use of the third, that is, the flesh, as of a second Eve to deceive Adam; or as of a very fit instrument and stimulus to move us to all evil. And the Apostle gives to the cause the name of effect, calling it sin (Rom. vii. 11); because it stirs up to every kind of sin. For the same reason theologians call it "Fomes peccati," which means the food and nourishment of sin; because it is the wood and oil that maintain the fire of sin. But we commonly call it sensuality, the flesh, or concupiscence, which may be explained as our sensitive appetite, the origin of all passions, as far as that appetite is corrupted or depraved by sin; for this it is that kindles and awakens all sins, and this is the fountain from which they all proceed; and therefore our other two enemies make especial use of it, and of the passions that proceed from it, to attack us. And, therefore, S. Basil said divinely, that the chief weapons wherewith the devil makes war upon us are our desires; because an immoderate attachment to the things that we desire makes us get them by right or wrong means, and break through all barriers, even the prohibitions of GOD's laws, which is the origin of all sin.

This appetite is one of the greatest tyrants to whom the wicked are subject, and, as the Apostle says, "sold" (Rom. vii. 14), as slaves are sold. But when he says that they are sold as slaves, he does not mean that by sin they have lost the free will with which they were created, for this, as to its essence, never has been, and never will be lost, whatever sins they commit; but he means that by sin this free will has become so weak, and the appetite so strong, that for the most part the strong overcomes the weak, and the rope breaks in its thinnest part.

What can be sadder than to see a man with a soul created in the image of GOD, and illumined with light from heaven, and with an understanding whose perceptions soar above all created things till they find GOD, despising all these great things, ruled and governed by the furious impulse of his brutish appetite, and that corrupted by sin, yea, moved and set on fire by the devil? What can be expected from such rule and guidance, but precipices, and disasters, and falls, and ills beyond comparison?



And that thou mayest see more plainly how vile this bondage is, I will explain it by a very palpable example. Let us suppose a man to be married to a wife, as noble, as beautiful, and as discreet as it is possible for a woman to be, and that a female slave of the wife, a skilful sorceress, envying the happiness of this marriage, has given him some drinks which so affect his brain that he hates his wife, shuts her up in a part of the house by herself, and gives himself entirely into the hands of the other woman, making her sit in his wife's seat, eating, drinking, sleeping, taking counsel, and arranging all the business of his house with her; and dissipating and spending all his property in banquets, festivals, pastimes, and the like, by her order; and that, not content with this, his madness goes so far that he makes his own wife serve this wicked woman as a slave in everything that she commands. Who can imagine that any man could be so deluded as this? And, if he were, how astonished would those who knew it be? How indignant against the wicked woman! how full of compassion for the noble wife! how would they cry out against the senseless husband! It would, indeed, be a most unworthy thing; but more unworthy beyond comparison is that of which we are speaking. For thou must know that in our own soul there are these two different women, the spirit and the flesh, which theologians call the superior and the inferior part. The superior part is that portion of the soul which contains the will and the reason, which is the natural light with which GOD created us, and which is so noble that it makes man the image of GOD, capable of comprehending GOD, and only lower than the Angels. (Ps. viii. 5.) This is the noble wife to whom GOD espoused man, that he might spend his life with her, ordering all things by her counsel, that is, by this heavenly light. But in the inferior part is the sensitive appetite of which we spoke before, which was given us that we might desire the things that are necessary for our life, and for the preservation of the human race, but only in the measure and order that reason appoints, as a steward buys food according to his master's orders. This appetite, then, is the slave of whom we have spoken; for it lacks the light of reason, and was not made to lead and command, but to be led and commanded. And

yet miserable man has become so attached and so devoted to the pleasures of this evil woman, that he forsakes the counsel of reason, by which he ought to be guided, and is ruled by her, doing whatever she tells him, that is, following all her bad desires and lusts. For we see men so sensual, so uncontrolled, so given over to the desires of their heart, that they obey and follow them in almost everything like brute beasts, without regarding the laws of justice and reason. And what is this but suffering their life to be governed by that abandoned slave, the flesh, giving themselves up to all the amusements, pastimes, and pleasures that she demands, and disregarding the counsels of their nobler and lawful wife—reason?

And what is worse, and more intolerable, they are not contented with this, but make the mistress serve the wicked slave, and watch day and night, inventing and seeking out all that is wanted to please and satisfy her. For when a man employs his whole reason and understanding in inventing innumerable varieties of personal adornments, of curious edifices, of exquisite dishes, of household furniture, and of plans and negotiations to gain what he needs for them, does he not turn away his soul from the spiritual exercises that belong to its proper dignity, and make it a slave, a cook, and a housekeeper to one who should have been its bondswoman. And when a sensual man, attached to a woman in order to destroy her chastity, employs all his reason and understanding in making all the mines and countermines that such a wicked undertaking requires, what is he doing but making the mistress serve the slave, employing that heavenly and divine light in seeking means for the base lusts of the flesh? When king David used so many means to hide his sin with Bathsheba—sending for her husband from the war, inviting him to sup, making him drunk at the supper, and afterwards giving him a letter with instructions and plans that he might be slain, (2 Sam. xi. 6-15,)—who planned these instructions but his understanding and reason, and who was the instigator but the perverse flesh, which desired to enjoy its pleasures more secretly and more securely? These are things of which Seneca, though but a heathen philosopher, was ashamed, and therefore he said, "I am greater, and born for

greater things, than to be the slave of my flesh." Now, if we should be amazed at the delusion of the lost and bewitched man whom I have imagined, how far greater ought our amazement to be at this delusion, by which so much more good is lost, and so much more evil is acquired.

And though this is a thing so monstrous, so pitiable, and at the same time so common, we pass it by lightly, and are not startled at such great disorders, because the whole world is disordered. For, as S. Bernard says, the abominations of the vicious are not perceived, because there are so many of them. For, as in a land where all are born black, blackness is not thought a disfigurement ; and where all are drunkards, drunkenness is not accounted a disgrace, contemptible as it is ; so, because this monstrous defect is common in all the world, hardly any one perceives it to be a fault.

We have now sufficiently declared what a wretched bondage this is, and how terrible is the punishment to which man is condemned for sin, so noble a creature being given up to so vile a tyrant. And such the son of Sirach accounted it, when he prayed to GOD, and besought Him not to let the greediness of the belly, or the lusts of the flesh, take hold of him, and not to give him over into an impudent mind, (Ecclus. xxiii. 6,) as a man prays not to be delivered to some cruel tyrant or executioner.

If thou wouldst know how great is the power of this tyrant, thou mayest easily learn by considering what the world has done and does every day. I will not set before thine eyes the fables of the poets concerning the renowned Hercules, of whom they say that, after he had conquered and overcome all the monsters in the world, he was overcome by impure love for a woman, and laying aside his club, he sat down among her maidens to spin, with a distaff at his girdle, because she ordered him to do so, and threatened him if he disobeyed. This was well feigned by the poets to signify the tyranny and the power of this appetite. Nor will I bring in here the ancient truths of Holy Scripture, wherein we see Solomon in one place filled with holiness and wisdom, and in another going after idols, and building temples for them, a thing which no less declares the tyranny of this

passion, (1 Kings iv. 29-31 ; xi. 4-8,) but I will speak of common instances which we see every day. See, then, to what an adulterous woman exposes herself in order to obey an inordinate lust, for I will take this passion for an instance, and by this thou mayest judge of the strength of the rest. She knows very well that if her husband takes her in the fact, he will kill her ; and that in the same instant she will lose her life, her honour, her property, her soul, and everything that it is possible to lose in this world and in the next, the greatest and the most total loss possible ; she knows that she shall leave her children, her parents, her brothers and sisters, and all her family disgraced, and with perpetual cause of grief ; and yet the force of this appetite, or rather the power of this tyrant, is so great, that it makes her risk all this, and incur all these horrible perils with the greatest readiness to obey its orders. What tyrant ever forced a captive to obey his commands at such great risk ? What slavery can be harder and more wretched than such bondage ?

This is the state in which the wicked live, as the prophet plainly signified, speaking of them as “such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being fast bound in misery and iron.” (Ps. cvii. 10.) What is this darkness, but the blindness in which the wicked live, of which we treated above ? for they neither know themselves nor GOD as they ought, nor do they know what they live for, nor for what end they were created, nor the vanity of the things that they love, nor the very slavery and bondage in which they live. And what is the “iron” in which they are bound but the strength of the attachments by which their hearts are fettered to the things that they love inordinately ? And what is their “misery” but the insatiable hunger with which they long after innumerable things that they do not obtain ? Can there be greater bondage than this ?

Let us see this by other instances. Look at Amnon, David's first-born son, who, when he had set his eyes on his sister Tamar, was so blinded with this darkness, so bound with these chains, and so afflicted with this hunger, that he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep, but lost his health, and lay in his bed sick through the violence of this passion. (2 Sam. xiii. 1, 2, 6.)

What must those chains of attachment and desire have been with which his heart was bound which made such an impression on his flesh, and on the very state of his body, as was able to cause this great sickness? And lest thou shouldst think that the cure of this disease is the obtaining of our desires, consider well that when he had obtained it, he was more diseased and more ruined than before. For Scripture says, that afterwards he hated his sister exceedingly, "so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her." (2 Sam. xiii. 15.) Thus the sin committed did not leave him free from the passion, but changed it into a greater one. Is there any tyrant in the world who so sends his prisoners hither and thither, and so makes them weave and unravel, go and return by the same paths?

Such, then, is the state of those who are under the tyranny of this vice; they are hardly masters of themselves, for they neither eat, nor drink, nor think, nor speak, nor dream but in this; and neither the fear of GOD, nor care for their souls, nor conscience, nor heaven, nor hell, nor death, nor judgment, nor sometimes even their life and honour which they so greatly prize, is able to recall them from this path, or to break this chain. And what shall I say of their jealousies, of the fears, the suspicions, the sudden alarms, the perils in which they continually risk their lives and their souls day and night for these lusts? Is there any tyrant in the world who takes such possession of the body of his slave as this vice does of the heart? For never is a slave so bound to the service of his master that he has not many intervals in the day and night wherein to rest, and to attend to his own affairs. But such is the nature of this vice, and of others like it, that when once they get possession of the heart, they so entirely absorb it, that a man has hardly strength, ability, time, or understanding for anything else. Not without reason did the son of Sirach say that "wine and women will make men of understanding to fall away" (Ecclus. xix. 2); for a man of the best abilities, when overcome by this vice, is almost as unfit for all that a man ought to do, as if he had drunk a barrel of wine. And therefore the ingenious poet feigns concerning the illustrious Queen Dido, that as soon as

she was blinded by attachment to Æneas, she desisted from all public functions, and from the building of her city. So that the walls that were begun remained unfinished, the youth were not exercised in arms, and the public officers neglected to strengthen the gates, and to complete the other necessary fortifications for the defence of their country. For he says that this tyrant so took possession of this woman's senses, that she was incapable of anything but that one care, and as that gained more dominion over her heart, it had less power for anything else. O pestilential vice, destroyer of nations, slayer of good practices, death of virtues, mist to dull good understandings, madness of man, intoxication of the wise, folly of the old, frenzy and fire of the young, pest of the whole human race.

And not this vice alone, but all the others exercise the same tyranny. Look at the ambitious and vain-glorious man who runs madly after the smoke of reputation, see how subject he is to this desire, how anxious after the praise of men, how diligent in seeking it, how he orders his life and all his affairs to this end; his household, his train, his dress, his table, his bed, his furniture, his servants, his gestures, his manners, his way of walking, of speaking, even of looking. Whatever he does he does for this end, for he does it in such a manner as best seems to give him a good appearance, and to attract praise, and obtain this breath of wind. So that if thou considerest him well, thou wilt find that in all his ordinary sayings and doings, he is laying snares and nets to catch this popular applause and admiration. And if we wonder at that emperor, who spent all his afternoons in chasing flies with a dagger in his hand, how far more surprising is the folly of this wretched man, who spends not only his afternoons but his whole life, in chasing the world and its worthless favour? For the wretched man neither does what he likes, nor dresses as he likes, nor goes where he likes; but often abstains from going to church and from associating with good men, for fear of what the world, to which he lives in subjection, will say. And, what is more, for this he spends more than he likes and than he has, and brings himself into endless difficulties, and casts his soul into hell, and also the souls of his descendants, whom he leaves heirs of his debts, and imitators of his follies. What punishment do these deserve but

that which it is written that a king inflicted on a very ambitious man, in whose nostrils he commanded a smoke to be made till he died, saying that he was justly punished with death by smoke, because he had spent all his life in seeking after the smoke of vanity? Can there be greater misery than this?

What shall I say, too, of the covetous and avaricious man, who is not only a slave, but also an idolater of his money, which he serves, which he worships, which he obeys in all that it commands, for which he fasts and takes the very bread out of his mouth, and which he loves more than GOD, for he continually offends GOD for it? In this is his rest, his glory, his hope, his whole heart, and all his thoughts: with this he lies down, with this he rises up, and about this he employs all his life and his senses, forgetting himself and all besides. Shall we say that such a man is the master of his money to do what he likes with it, or that he is its slave and bondsman? for he does not order the money for himself, but himself for the money, robbing his mouth and even his soul to give to his purse,

What worse bondage can there be than this? If thou callest one a captive who is incarcerated in a dungeon, or whose feet are made fast in the stocks, is not he a prisoner whose soul is bound by excessive attachment to the thing that he loves? For when a man is in this case none of his powers remain perfectly free, nor is he master of himself, but is enslaved to what he loves inordinately; for where his love is his heart is bound, although his free-will is not destroyed. And it makes no difference with what sort of bonds thou art tied, if the greatest and best part of thee is in bondage; nor is thy captivity less because thou art voluntarily imprisoned; for, being bondage indeed, it is but the more perilous because it is wilful; as poison is not the less harmful for being sweet. And there cannot be worse bondage than that which so presses on thee, and holds thee so tightly, that it makes thee shut thine eyes against GOD, against truth, against right, and against the laws of justice; and so tyrannises over thee that, even as a drunkard is not his own master, but is governed by wine, so thou art not master of thyself, but art ruled by thy passion, though thy free-will is not destroyed. And if bondage is a torment, what greater torment

can there be than what is suffered by one of these unhappy men who continually cannot obtain what he wants, and will not cease to desire it, and knows not what to do, nor what road to follow. And in this perplexity he may say, as the poet said to an ill-tempered woman, "I hate thee, and at the same time I love thee; and if thou askest the cause, the cause is, that I can neither live with thee, nor live without thee." And if sometimes he tries to break these chains, and to overcome these attachments, he finds such great resistance that he often despairs of victory, and thus the wretched man returns to put his feet again in the same fetters. Thinkest thou that this may be called bondage and torment?

And if it were but one chain, the evil would be less; for a man bound with only one bond, and fighting with only one enemy, would less despond of victory. But what shall we say of the other bonds and attachments with which the wretched man is tied? For human life is subject to a great variety of necessities, and every one of them is a chain and an occasion for coveting, and a snare to take our hearts captive, although this is more the case with some than with others. For some men are naturally so grasping, that they can hardly let go what they have once laid hold of. Others are melancholy, and that temperament makes them vehement and fearful. Others are pusillanimous, and think the smallest things very precious and desirable, for to a little heart even little things seem great, as Seneca says. Others are naturally vehement in whatever they desire, and this is usually the case with women, of whom a philosopher says that they love or hate, because they are incapable of a medium in their affections. All these suffer a very hard and rigorous bondage through the violence of the passions that lead them captive. Then, if it is a great misery to be bound with one chain and the slave of one master, what is it to be bound with so many chains, and the slave of so many masters as the wicked man is, for his masters are as many as the passions that he obeys and the vices that he serves!

What greater misery can there be than this? If all the dignity of man, as man, consists in two things, reason and free-will, what can be more contrary to both than passion, which blinds

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reason and leads free-will captive? And this shows how hurtful and prejudicial every inordinate passion is, for it casts man down from the throne of his dignity, darkening his reason and perverting his free-will, two things without which he is no longer a man, but a brute.

This then, my Brother, is the wretched state in which all the wicked live, being governed, not by GOD or by reason, but by appetite and passion.

From this miserable bondage the SON of GOD came to deliver us ; and this is the liberty and the victory of which Isaiah the Prophet speaks, saying, "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor." (Isa. ix. 3, 4.) All these words, yoke, staff, rod, are very suitable to the tyranny and violence of our appetite, which the devil, who is "the prince of this world" (S. John xiv. 30), uses as an instrument, and a very fit one, to tyrannise over men, and bring them into subjection to sin. From all this strength and power the SON of GOD delivered us, by the abundance of grace which His death obtained for us. Wherefore, the Apostle says that "our old man is crucified with Him." (Rom. vi. 6.) And by our old man he means this appetite, which was diseased by the first sin. For by the great sacrifice and the merit of His passion, He obtains grace for us to subjugate this tyrant, and to tread him under our feet, making him suffer the punishment of retaliation, crucifying him who before crucified us, and leading him captive to whom we were in captivity. And thus is that fulfilled which Isaiah prophesied in another place, saying, "They shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors." (Isa. xiv. 2.) For before grace came, our sensual appetite subjugated and tyrannised over our spirit, making it obey its evil desires, as has been declared above ; but when the spirit has received grace it is so helped thereby, that it prevails against that tyrant, brings it into subjection, and makes it obey as it ought.

This was marvellously figured in the death of Adoni-bezek, king of Jerusalem, whom the children of Israel slew, first cutting

off his thumbs and his great toes ; and who, seeing himself in this state, and remembering the cruelties that he had been accustomed to commit, spake thus, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table : as I have done, so GOD hath requited me." And Scripture adds that "they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died." (Judges i. 7). This cruel tyrant is a figure of the prince of this world, who before the coming of the SON of GOD, maimed men in their hands and their feet, mutilating and disabling them for GOD'S service, wounding their hands that they might not do good, and their feet that they might not desire it ; and moreover making them eat the miserable crumbs that fell from his table ; that is, the worldly and sensual delights with which that wicked prince feeds his servants ; which with good cause may be called crumbs rather than pieces of bread, because this tyrant bestows these scraps very grudgingly on his followers, and never gives them with the fulness and abundance that they desire. But after the SAVIOUR came into the world, He made the tyrant endure the suffering that he inflicted on others, mutilating his hands and feet, that is, breaking and destroying all his power. And it is especially said that his death was in Jerusalem, for there it was that the SAVIOUR of the world, by dying, slew the prince of this world ; and there, being crucified, He crucified him, and bound his feet and hands, and took away his power. And thus immediately after His most sacred passion, men began to triumph over this tyrant, getting such mighty mastery over the world, the devil, and all their vices and appetites, that all the torments and flatteries of the world were insufficient to lead them into any deadly sin.

Thou wilt ask perchance from whence this marvellous victory and liberty proceed. To this I say that under GOD it proceeds first, as we have said, from grace, which by means of the virtues that proceed from it, so tempers and quiets the fury of our passions, that it does not let them prevail against reason. Wherefore as charmers by certain words charm serpents so that though alive they are not poisonous, and though possessing venom they do no harm ; so does Divine Grace charm these poisonous serpents, our passions, so that though they live and

retain their natural existence, they have lost the power which they before possessed, of poisoning our life. And this is what Isaiah the Prophet signified, when he said, "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 8.) It is plain that the Prophet speaks not here of material, but of spiritual serpents, namely, our passions and bad inclinations, which are enough, when they break out, to poison the world. Nor does he speak of corporeal, but of spiritual children, amongst whom the sucking child signifies those who are beginning to serve GOD, and who still need milk to nourish them ; whilst the weaned child stands for the more advanced, who can walk on their feet, and eat bread with the crust. Treating then of both, he says of the first that they will play and rejoice because being among these spiritual serpents, yet by the Grace of GOD they receive no mortal injury from them, not consenting to sin ; but of the others who are already weaned and have made some progress in the way of GOD, he says that they shall put their hand in the cockatrice's den, that is, that GOD will guard them in still greater dangers, for the promise of the Psalm shall be fulfilled in them, "Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet." (Ps. xci. 13.) These are they who shall put their hand in the cockatrice's den, for the abundant grace that shall be poured out on the earth shall so charm these serpents, that they shall be unable to hurt the children of GOD.

The Apostle explains this to us still more clearly, and without metaphors, saying, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall beliver me from the body of this death ?" and immediately answers himself, saying, "I thank GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD." (Rom. vii. 24, 25.) By the body of this death he does not mean the body subject to that natural death for which we all look, but what he elsewhere calls "the body of sin," (Rom. vi. 6) ; that is, our depraved appetite, from which as from a body proceed the members, that is, all the inordinate desires and passions that lead us to sin. And from this body, as from a cruel

tyrant, the Apostle thanks GOD for delivering us by the grace given through CHRIST.

A second and very great cause is the great joy and spiritual comfort that the righteous enjoy, as we declared above. For this so quenches the thirst of all their desires, that they easily overcome and put away all appetites and lusts; and when they have found this fountain of all good, they lose their anxious longing for other things, as the LORD declared to the woman of Samaria, saying, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," that is, of GOD'S grace, "shall never thirst." (S. John iv. 14.) Which S. Gregory thus explains in a homily, "He that has perfectly known the sweetness of the heavenly life, immediately forsakes the things that he loved sensually, he leaves what he possessed, he disperses abroad what he had laid up, his heart is set on fire with desires of heaven, all things on earth are displeasing to him, what he thought beautiful is now ugly, for the splendour of that precious pearl alone shines brightly on his soul." When the vessel of our heart is thus filled with this heavenly liquor and the thirst of our soul is quenched, it has no occasion to go hungering and seeking after the perishing things of this life; and therefore it is free from the bondage of earthly attachments, for where there is no desire or love, there is neither bond nor chain. And thus the heart that has found the LORD of all, finds itself in a manner lord of all, for in Him alone it has all good.

To these two gifts of GOD, Who helps us to attain this freedom, is added the care and diligence which the righteous use in bringing their flesh into obedience to the spirit, and their passions to reason. This gradually mortifies the passions, and accustoms them to what is right, and destroys much of their former vehemence and fury. For, as S. Chrysostom says, if savage beasts, by association with men, in time lose their natural ferocity, and acquire human gentleness and mildness, it is not surprising that our natural passions, being compelled to obey reason in time become tame, and learn to partake in some degree in the spirit of reason and to take pleasure in its works. And if custom alone can do this, how much more grace when assisted by custom!

And from this it follows that the servants of GOD often have more sensual joy, if such an expression may be used, in recollectedness, in silence, in reading, in prayer, in meditation, and other like occupations, than they ever had in games, in field-sports, and in all the conversations and amusements in the world ; and come to account these things a torment, for the very flesh hates what it once loved, and finds pleasure and satisfaction in what it hated. And so true is this, that, as S. Bonaventure says in the prologue of his *Incentive to the Love of GOD*, the inferior part of our soul often takes such delight in the exercises of prayer and communion with GOD, that it is a torment to it to be hindered by any lawful impediment. And this is what the Prophet signified, when he said, "I will thank the LORD for giving me warning ; my reins also chasten me ;" or according to another version, "instruct me, in the night-season." (Ps. xvi. 8.) This is indeed an especial effect of Divine Grace ; for by the reins, commentators understand the inward emotions and affections of man, which as we have said, are ordinarily incentives and tempters to sin ; but which, by the power of grace, not only cease to incite us to sin, but help us to do right ; not only cease from serving the devil, under whose banners they were enlisted, but pass over to the army of CHRIST, and turn their arms against the enemy. This may be seen in many exercises of the spiritual life, and especially in contrition and sorrow for sin, in which the inferior part of our soul shares, afflicting itself and shedding tears. And therefore the holy Prophet says that "in the night-season," when the day is over, and good men examine their consciences, and bewail their sins, the time when, as he says elsewhere, he communed with his own heart, and searched out his spirits, (Ps. lxxvii. 6), his reins chastened him ; because the pain that he felt in this part of his soul for having offended GOD, was a punishment and a warning not to return again to those sins for which he grieved. With good reason therefore does he thank the LORD, because not only the superior part of the soul wherein reason resides, invited him to what is right, but also the inferior part which ordinarily leads and excites men to evil. But although this is true, and is one of the great glories of the redemption of CHRIST, Who, being

a most perfect Redeemer, has most perfectly redeemed and delivered us, yet nobody must grow careless and trust his flesh, however mortified it may be, as long as he is in this mortal life.

These then are the chief causes of this marvellous liberty, from which follows among other effects a new knowledge of GOD, and a confirmation of the faith and religion that we profess, as the LORD Himself testifies by Ezekiel, saying, "They shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them." (Ezek. xxxiv. 27.) This yoke, as we have already said, is sensuality, or an excessive inclination to sin, which dwells in our flesh, oppressing us, and bringing us into subjection to sin. The bands of this yoke are the evil inclinations with which the devil binds us, and drags us away, and they grow stronger as they are confirmed by habit, as S. Augustine confesses of himself, saying, "I was fettered not with another's irons, but with my own iron will. My enemy had possession of my will, and thence had made a chain for me, and held me bound. For from my perverse will proceeded lust, and lust served became a habit, and this was the chain with which the devil held my heart enthralled." When a man has been some time in this bondage, as that saint was, and has often attempted to escape from captivity, and has found it difficult as he did : when that man has turned to GOD, and finds his chains broken and his passions mortified ; when he finds himself free and the master of his appetites ; when he sees the yoke under his feet that he carried on his shoulders, has he not reason to believe that it is GOD Who has broken these chains, and taken off this heavy yoke ? And will he not praise GOD with the Prophet, and say, "Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the LORD ?" (Ps. cxvi. 14, 15.)

## CHAPTER XIX.

*Of the Eighth Privilege of Virtue; namely, The Blessed Peace and Inward Quiet that the Righteous enjoy; and of the Miserable Strife and Restlessness that the Wicked suffer inwardly.*

FROM the last mentioned privilege, the liberty of the sons of GOD, follows another not inferior to it, namely, The inward Peace and Rest in which they live. To understand this, thou must know that there are three sorts of peace : peace with our neighbours, peace with GOD, and peace with ourselves. Peace with our neighbour consists in kindly feelings and friendship towards him, and in having no ill will to any. David had this, when he said, " My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace. I labour for peace : but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle." (Ps. cxx. 5, 6.) This is the peace that S. Paul recommends to us, when he says, " If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) The second peace, that with GOD, consists in the favour and friendship of GOD, and is obtained by means of justification, which makes reconciliation between man and GOD, making GOD love man, and man love GOD, and taking away all strife and contradiction between them. Of this the Apostle said, " Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST." (Rom. v. 1.) The third peace is that which a man has with himself, and this need not appear strange, for we know that in one man there are two contrary men, the interior and the exterior, the spirit and the flesh, passion and reason ;

and that the passions not only carry on a cruel and continual warfare against the spirit, but disturb the whole man with their burning desires and lusts, and with their ravening hunger, and thus destroy his inward peace, the rest and quietness of his spirit.

In this continual strife and restlessness all carnal men live. For on one hand they are devoid of grace, which is the bridle to check the passions, and on the other their desires are so wild and uncontrolled that they hardly know what it is to resist them in anything, and therefore their lives are full of numberless desires after various things. One craves for distinction, another for some office, for the favour of the great, for dignities, for wealth, for some marriage, for all kinds of pleasures and amusements. For this appetite is like an insatiable fire that never says enough, or like a devouring beast that is never satisfied, or like the horseleech of which Agur says that it hath "two daughters, crying, Give, give." (Prov. xxx. 15.) This horseleech is the insatiable appetite of our heart: the two daughters are want and greediness, which are like a real and an imaginary thirst, and one of which is as tormenting as the other. And this is why neither the poor nor the rich, if they are wicked, can rest, for the want of one and the greediness of the other, are always soliciting the heart, and crying, Give, give. What rest, what repose, what peace can a man have with these two incessant beggars always knocking at his door, and asking for innumerable things which it is not in his power to give? What rest could a mother's heart have if she had ten or twelve children round her crying aloud for bread, and she had none for them. This is one of the greatest miseries of the wicked. Hungry and thirsty, as the Psalmist says, their soul faints in them. (Ps. cvii. 5.) For self-love, the origin of these desires, has gained the mastery over them, and they seek their whole happiness in visible things, and this is the cause of their raging hunger and thirst after them. But as they cannot always obtain what they desire, because others greedier or stronger than they hinder them, they are troubled and distressed like a greedy spoilt child, who stamps and roars when he is refused what he asks. For, as the Wise Man saith, "When the



desire cometh, it is a tree of life," (Prov. xiii. 12); but nothing is more painful than to desire and not obtain our wishes, which is like dying of hunger, and having no food. And moreover, when what they desire is forbidden them, the very prohibition increases their desire, and the unfulfilled desire their torment, and thus they go on in a ceaseless whirl and never rest.

The SAVIOUR mystically signified this wretched state in the parable of the prodigal son, who left his father's house, and took his journey into a far country, and there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he was reduced to such want, that he, the son of so great a father, was employed in feeding swine. Nay, "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." (Luke xv. 13-16.) How could the whole course of a wicked man's life and its miseries be better painted? Who is the prodigal son who leaves his father's house, but the miserable sinner who departs from GOD, wanders into every vice, and misspends all GOD's benefits? What is the famine-stricken land but this miserable world, full of worldlings, whose appetite is so insatiable that they are never content with what they have, but are like ravening wolves hungering after more? And what are the occupations in which they spend their lives but feeding swine; that is, seeking to satisfy their filthy and unclean lusts? Look at the life of a dissipated worldly man, from morning till night, and from night till morning; you will find that he passes the whole of it in feeding and satisfying some of these brutish senses, his sight, his taste, his hearing, his touch, or some such thing, like a mere disciple of Epicurus, and not of CHRIST; as if he had nothing but the body of a beast; as if he believed there was no object but sensual pleasure. These men care for nothing but to run hither and thither in chase of pleasures and amusements to gratify some of these senses. What are their pageants, their feasts, their banquetings, their festivals, their beds, their music, their conversations, their shows, and their excursions, but seeking after food for these swine? Give it any name thou wilt, call it fashion, or grandeur, or courtliness, in GOD's vocabulary its name is feeding swine. For as swine are

animals that delight in dirt and mud, and feed on filthy and disgusting food, so do the hearts of these men delight in the filthy and unclean mud of carnal pleasures.

But what surpasses even this misery is that the son of so exalted a FATHER, made to feed at GOD'S table on Angels' food, cannot even fill himself with these husks, so scarce are they ; for there are so many buyers of this merchandise that one hinders another, and all remain hungering. I mean that when so many go after the spoil there must be great contentions among them, and it is impossible for the swine under the oak to refrain from grunting and gashing each other, and fighting for the acorns.

This is the miserable state, this is the hunger and thirst which the Prophet describes, when he says, "They went astray in the wilderness out of the way, and found no city to dwell in ; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." (Ps. cvii. 4, 5.) What is this hunger and this thirst but the burning desire that the wicked have for worldly things, which rages more the more it is gratified, thirsts more the more it drinks, and burns more as more wood is thrown upon it ? O miserable people, what is the cause of this burning thirst, but that ye have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and hewn you out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ?" (Jer. ii. 13.) When Holofernes besieged the city of Bethulia, he "came to the fountains of their waters, and took them, and destroyed the conduits whereby they entered into the city ; so that the besieged had only some little springs near the walls, where they drank a few drops by stealth, enough merely to moisten their lips, but not to quench their thirst." (Judith vii. Vulg.) And what are ye doing, all ye that love pleasure, that seek after distinction, that delight in self-indulgence, but forsaking the Fountain of living waters, and drinking by stealth of the wretched little springs that ye find at hand, which only moisten the lips and awaken thirst, instead of quenching it ? "O wretched being," says the Prophet, "what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink troubled and muddy waters ?" (Jer. ii. 18, Vulg.) What water can be more muddy than sensual pleasure, which cannot be drunk without an ill smell and an ill savour ? For what smell

is worse than the infamy of sin? and what savour is worse than remorse of conscience, both of which it produces, and both of which, as a philosopher truly says, are the perpetual companions of carnal pleasure?

But this is not all, for the appetite is blind, and makes no difference between attainable and unattainable things, and a vehement desire often makes the hardest things seem easy, and therefore men desire many things which they cannot obtain. For there is no very desirable thing that has not many seekers to desire and pursue it, and many possessors to fight and defend it: so that the appetite desires and cannot; covets, and obtains not; hungers, and no man gives it food; and often stretches out its arms in vain, and rises up early, and meets with no success; and sometimes when it is already mounting the ladder it is cast headlong from the walls, and what it already thought its own is taken out of its hands; and then men are ready to die of despair, or are torn with inward rage, at seeing themselves so far from what they desire. For the two chief powers of the soul, the irascible and the concupiscible, are so ordered and connected that one helps the other, and therefore when the concupiscible does not obtain its desire, the irascible immediately stands up for it, afflicted, infuriated, and rushing into every danger and every battle, to satisfy its sister when it sees her gloomy and discontented. From this confusion of desires arises the inward disquiet whereof we speak, which S. James the Apostle calls war, when he says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not." (S. Jas. iv. 1, 2.) And with good reason he calls it war, because of the natural strife and opposition that exists between the spirit and the flesh, and their opposite desires.

And a yet sadder thing happens, which is this; that men often obtain what would seem enough to give them all the satisfaction that they desire, and when their circumstances allow them to live as they please, they take it into their heads that they ought to claim some honour, or title, or place, or precedence, or the like; and if they cannot get it they fret and worry themselves, and are more troubled about the trifle that

they want, than glad of all that they possess; and so they live with a perpetual thorn, or rather with a scourge, which spoils and destroys all their prosperity, and makes it vanish like smoke. This I call having their guns spiked, as cannon are spiked by the enemy in time of war, and thus, without being destroyed or removed, are made useless. And GOD thus deals with the wicked to show them plainly, if they would open their eyes, that the happiness and contentment of the human heart are a gift of GOD, and that He gives it when He pleases, and to whom He pleases, without any of these outward means, and that He takes it away when He pleases, by merely spiking the guns as we have called it, that is, by allowing some of these trifles to sully or drain away their prosperity. Thus remaining as rich and prosperous as ever as to outward things, they are inwardly as sad and dissatisfied as if they had nothing. The LORD signified this by Isaiah, when He spoke against the stout heart and the high looks of the king of Assyria, and said that He would "send among his fat oxen leanness," and under his glory He would "kindle a burning like the burning of a fire." (Isa. x. 16.) Thus we see how GOD can sink a ship in the midst of a prosperous navigation, how He can bring weakness into the midst of strength, and misery into prosperity. The same is signified in the Book of Job, where it is said that "The giants groan under the waters," (Job xxvi. 5, Vulg.), to show that GOD has abysses and afflictions for the great as well as for the little, who seem more subject to earthly troubles. But Solomon signifies this yet more plainly, and speaks of it as one of the greatest miseries of the world, saying, "There is another evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom GOD hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet GOD giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it." (Eccles. vi. 1, 2.) What is meant by a man's not having power to eat what he desires, but that he does not enjoy the things that he possesses, nor get the satisfaction from them that they might give? For by one little opening, such as we have spoken of, GOD ordains that all their happiness shall be drained away, whereby we learn that as true wisdom

comes not from dead letters but from GOD, so true peace and happiness are not given by worldly wealth and honours, but by GOD.

Now to return to the subject, if even those who have all things that they desire, while they have not GOD, live in such discontent and dissatisfaction, how must it be with those to whom all things are wanting? for every want is a hunger and thirst that torments them, and a thorn that pierces their hearts. What peace, what quiet can there be in a soul that is full of such importunate desires, such strife, such restless thoughts and longings? Well did the Prophet say of them, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (Isa. lvii. 20.) For what sea, what winds and waves can be more furious than the passions of the wicked, which at times overturn the world? And sometimes contrary winds strive upon these seas, which is a greater torment. For the very appetites often fight against each other, like opposing winds; for what the flesh desires, honour forbids; and what honour desires, worldly interest forbids; and what worldly interest desires, reputation forbids; and what reputation desires, sloth and self-indulgence forbid; so that desiring every thing, they know not what to desire, and they cannot understand themselves, and know not what to take or what to leave, so that they are like men suffering under a complication of diseases, where medicine is unavailing, because what is good for one malady is bad for another. This is the confusion of tongues at Babel (Gen. xi. 9), and the strife concerning which the Prophet makes his prayer to GOD, saying, "Destroy their tongues, O LORD, and divide them; for I have spied unrighteousness and strife in the city." (Ps. lv. 9.) For what is this division of tongues, and what is this unrighteousness and strife, but the war that rages in the hearts of worldly men, when their various appetites contradict each other, desiring opposite things, and one hating what the other delights in.

This then is the lot of the wicked; but the righteous on the contrary having all their appetites and desires under control, and all their passions mortified and brought into subjection, finding their happiness, not in perishing and deceitful things,

but in GOD alone, Who is the Centre of their joy, and in those true and everlasting treasures that no man can take from them ; accounting self-love and their own flesh, with all its troop of appetites and desires, as an enemy ; and having their will entirely resigned and given up into the hands of GOD, cannot be so disquieted or troubled by any of these assaults as to lose their peace.

GOD promises many rewards to the lovers of virtue, and this is one of the chief of them, and Holy Scripture continually testifies of it. The royal Prophet says, "Great is the peace that they have who love Thy law, and they are not offended at it." (Ps. cxix. 165.) And the LORD Himself says by Isaiah, "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isa. xlvi. 18.) He speaks of peace as a river, because it is able to quench the flames of our desires, to temper the heat of our lusts, to fill the dry and barren water-courses of our hearts, and to refresh our souls. Solomon signified the same very briefly, saying, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Prov. xvi. 7.) For what are these enemies who make war on man, but his own passions and the evil inclinations of his flesh, which is always fighting against the Spirit? And GOD makes them to be at peace with Him, when by the power of virtue and of good habit they become accustomed to the works of the SPIRIT, and no longer oppose them so violently. For though the passions oppose great obstacles to virtue at the beginning ; yet when it has attained to perfection it acts gently and easily and with far less opposition. This lastly, is the peace of which David speaks under another name, when he says, "Thou shalt make room enough under me for to go, that my footsteps shall not slide." (Ps. xviii. 36.) Here the Prophet declares the difference between the path of the righteous and that of the wicked. The hearts of the wicked are afflicted and oppressed by the fears and cares in which they live ; they are like travellers going along a very narrow path amidst great precipices and ravines, and afraid of falling at every step. But the righteous man walks securely and at ease, like one who journeys on a broad and level road, and has

no cause for fear. Good men understand this far better in practice than in theory, for they all feel the difference in their own hearts as they were when they served the world, and as they are when devoted to GOD. Then every trouble filled them with distress, terror, fear, and oppression of heart; but since they have left the way of the world, turned their heart to the love of everlasting things, and made GOD their only joy and hope, they pass through these things for the most part with a heart so free, so quiet, so submissive to GOD'S will, that they are themselves astonished at the change, and feel as if they were different persons, or had new hearts. And in truth they are themselves, and not themselves, for they are themselves as to nature, but not as to grace; for it is grace that works this change, though a perfect assurance of this is never given to man. This is what GOD promises by Isaiah, saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." (Isa. xliii. 2.) For what waters are these, but the streams of tribulations in this life, and the flood of innumerable miseries that surround us daily? And what fire is this, but the "burning fiery furnace" at Babylon, heated by Nebuchadnezzar's servants, that is, by the devils, from which the flames of our inordinate desires stream forth? (Dan. iii. 19; Song of the Three Children, xxiv.) Now, if any man continues unhurt in the midst of these fires and these waters, may he not discern hereby that he has the Presence of the HOLY GHOST and the help of Divine Grace? This is the peace which the Apostle says "passeth all understanding," (Phil. iv. 7,) for it is so high and supernatural a gift of GOD, that the human understanding, left to itself, is incapable of comprehending how it is possible for a heart of flesh to continue quiet, peaceful, and at rest amid the storms and tempests of the world.

Let all who feel this praise and glorify the Worker of these wonders, and say with the Prophet, "O come hither, and behold the works of the LORD, what destruction he hath brought upon the earth! He maketh wars to cease in all the world; He breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still, then, and know that I

am GOD: I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. xlvi. 8, 9.)

Can anything be richer, sweeter, more desirable than this quiet, this rest, this largeness and freedom of heart, this blessed peace?

But if thou wouldst go further, and inquire what are the causes from which this heavenly gift proceeds, the answer is, that it proceeds from all the privileges of virtue spoken of before; for as all the vices are linked together in a chain, each one being a cause of all the rest, so all the virtues are joined like steps, each ascending from the other, the highest which produces the greatest fruit proceeding also from most roots. And thus this blessed peace, which is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22), proceeds from all the other fruits and privileges of which we have been speaking; but most especially it proceeds from virtue itself, whose inseparable companion it is. For, as outward honour and reverence are naturally due to virtue, so also is inward peace, which is at once its fruit and its reward. For inward strife proceeds, as we have said, from the pride and restlessness of the passions; and therefore, when they are overcome and brought into subjection by the virtues, the cause of all this tumult and disquiet ceases. This is one of the three things in which the happiness of the kingdom of heaven on earth consists, for, as the Apostle says, "The kingdom of GOD is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST." (Rom. xiv. 17.) Here righteousness, according to the use of the Hebrew tongue, signifies that very virtue and holiness whereof we are speaking; and in this, together with its fruits, peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST, consist the happiness and the foretaste of heavenly joys that the righteous enjoy in this life. And that this peace is the effect of virtue, the LORD tells us plainly by Isaiah, saying, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18.) This peace, this quietness is inward peace, the rest and stillness of the passions, whose clamours and anxieties disturb the silence of the soul.

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This peace arises, secondly, from that freedom and mastery over the passions of which we spoke above. For, as there is peace and tranquillity in a land as soon as it is conquered, and its inhabitants are brought into subjection, and then every man sits "under his vine and under his fig-tree, and there is none to make him afraid," (Micah iv. 4) ; so, when the passions of our soul, which occasion all its disquiet, are conquered and subdued, there follows an inward silence and an admirable peace, and it lives in quiet, free from their wearisome strife and disturbance. As long as the passions were masters, they deranged and disordered the whole man ; but now that he is free from their tyranny, and they are in bondage, there is none to perturb his house, and to trouble his peace.

This peace arises, thirdly, from the great spiritual joy of which we spoke above, which so satisfies and appeases the very desires and affections of our appetite, that for the time they are quiet, and rest satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the table of the superior portion of the soul. For the concupiscible part is content with the great joy that it receives in GOD, and the irascible is appeased by seeing its sister content and satisfied. And thus the whole man is peaceful and quiet, through his participation and delight in the Supreme Good.

This peace arises, fourthly, from the inward joy and testimony of a good conscience, spoken of above, which gives great rest and quietness to the soul of the righteous ; though it gives him not full assurance, lest he grow careless, and lose the holy incentive of fear.

This peace arises, lastly, from the trust that good men have in GOD, of which also we have spoken, for this especially keeps them calm and peaceful amid all the tempests of life, moored with the anchor of hope ; that is, by their trust in GOD as their Father, their Protector, their Defender, and their Shield, under Whose Shadow they dwell in peace, singing with the Prophet, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest ; for it is Thou, LORD, only that makest me dwell in safety." (Ps. iv. 9.) This is the origin of a good man's peace, and the remedy of all his sorrows ; for what cause has he for anxiety who has such a Protector ?

## CHAPTER XX.

*Of the Ninth Privilege of Virtue ; namely, how God hears the Prayers of the Righteous, while He rejects those of the Wicked.*

THOSE who follow after virtue have another great privilege, for GOD hears their prayers, and this is an excellent cure for all the miseries and necessities of this life. For thou must know that there have been two universal deluges, one material, the other spiritual, and both had the same cause—sin. The material flood, in the days of Noah, destroyed every living substance in the world, except what one ark contained, when the waters devoured everything, and the sea swallowed up the earth, with all the labours and the riches of men. (Gen. vii. 23.) But the other and earlier flood, which originated in the first sin, was far greater than this ; for it injured not only the men who lived at that time, but all ages past, present, and to come ; and it hurt not only their bodies, but far more their souls, which were completely stripped and spoiled of all the riches and graces that the world had received in the first man, as we plainly see in a new-born child, who comes into the world as naked spiritually as he is bodily.

From this first flood proceed all the poverty and wretchedness to which man's life is subject, and so great are its miseries that a great Doctor of the Church found matter enough in them to fill a book. And many great philosophers, considering on one hand the dignity of man above all created things, and on the other the miseries and vices to which he is subject, have

been filled with wonder at seeing such disorder in the world, because they knew not its cause, which is sin. For they saw that he alone of all creatures follows after a thousand various carnal lusts and pleasures, that he alone is tormented by avarice, by ambition, by an insatiable desire of life, by care for his burial, and by anxiety as to what will follow it; for no creature has a frailer life, a more ardent desire, a more senseless fear, a more furious anger. They saw other creatures pass through life without sicknesses, and without the torment of physicians and of medicines; they saw them provided with all necessaries without labour or anxiety; but they saw miserable man subject to innumerable diseases, accidents, disasters, necessities, and pains of body and of soul, befalling not only himself, but all whom he loves. The past gives him pain, the present afflicts him, the future fills him with anxious care; and to feed one mouth with bread and water, he is often obliged to toil his whole life long.

At this rate, we should never have done relating the miseries of man's life, which holy Job says is "a warfare," and "his days like the days of an hireling!" (Job vii. 1, marg.) Some learned men of old felt this so strongly that they said they knew not whether Nature had been our mother or our stepmother, that she had brought us into such miseries. Others said that it was best not to be born, or to die immediately after our birth. And there was one who said that many men would not accept life, if it were given them, after they had experienced it; that is, if it had been possible to try life before receiving it.

Our life being brought to this by sin, and all the store that we had received being lost in that first flood, what remedy was left to us by Him Who thus punished us? What can a sick and crippled man do when he has lost all that he possesses in a storm at sea? Without property, without health to gain it, what resource has he but beggary as long as he lives? Man in this universal deluge has lost all that he possessed, and is left poor and naked, what resource has he but to knock as a poor beggar at GOD'S door? The holy King Jehoshaphat taught us this very plainly when he said, "O our GOD, we have no might, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee." (2 Chron. xx. 12.) And holy King Hezekiah signified it no less plainly,

saying, "From day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me. Like a young swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove." (Isa. xxxviii. 13, 14, Vulg.) As much as to say, "I am so poor, I depend so entirely, O LORD, on Thy Mercy and Thy Providence, that I am not sure of one day's life; and therefore I am continually mourning before Thee as a dove, and crying to Thee as a young swallow cries to its parents." The holy man who said this was a king, and a great king; but far greater was his father David, yet he used the same remedy in all his necessities, and said, "I cried unto the LORD with my voice; yea, even unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaints before Him, and showed Him of my trouble. When my spirit was in heaviness, Thou knewest my path." (Ps. cxlii. 1-3.) That is, "When I look on every side, and see all ways and doors of hope shut; when earthly remedies fail, I seek those that are heavenly by means of prayer, which GOD has left me for a help in all my troubles."

Thou wilt perhaps inquire if this is a sure and universal remedy for all the necessities of life? This is a thing which depends on the Divine Will, and therefore no man can answer but those whom GOD has chosen as His agents to record it, and to this office He has appointed the Apostles and Prophets, one of whom speaks thus: "What nation is there so great, who hath GOD so nigh unto them, as the LORD our GOD is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deut. iv. 7.) These are the words of GOD, spoken by the mouth of a man, and they assure us, beyond all possible assurance, that when we pray, although we see no man, and hear no answer, we are not speaking to the walls, or beating the air, but that GOD is there, giving us audience, inclining His ear to our prayers, taking compassion on our necessities, and preparing a remedy, if a remedy is good for us. What greater comfort can we have in prayer than this certain assurance of the Divine Presence? But if this is sufficient to comfort and encourage us, how much more the words and promises that we have from our LORD'S own mouth in His Gospel, where He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (S. Matt. vii. 7; S. Luke xi. 9.) What better pledge could He

give than this? Who can doubt these words? Who can lack courage in his prayers with this royal charter?

One of the greatest privileges that the lovers of virtue have in this life is this certainty that these sure and abundant promises are chiefly given to them. For one of the especial mercies that our LORD bestows upon them in payment for their faith and obedience is that He will be present with them, and always hear them in all their prayers. Holy King David testifies this, when he says, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." (Ps. xxxiv. 15.) And by Isaiah the LORD Himself promises, "Then," that is, when thou hast kept My commandments, "shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here am I." (Isa. lviii. 9.) And not only when they call, but even before they call, He promises by the same Prophet that He will hear them. (Isa. lxxv. 24.) But greater than all these promises is that which the LORD gives by S. John, saying, "If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (S. John xv. 7.) And because so great a promise seems to surpass all faith and belief of man, He repeats it again, with yet stronger affirmation, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER in My Name, He will give it you." (S. John xvi. 23.) What greater grace, what greater treasure, what greater power could there be? "Ye shall ask what ye will," He saith, "and it shall be done unto you." A promise worthy of the Promiser? For who could promise this but GOD? Whose power could extend to such great things but GOD'S power? What goodness would oblige itself to such great gifts but GOD'S goodness. This makes man, in a manner, lord of all; it gives him the keys of the Divine treasures. All other gifts and mercies of GOD, however great, have limits; but this, the royal gift of an Infinite LORD, has a kind of infinity, for He says not this or that, but "whatsoever ye will," being a thing good for your salvation. If men knew how to value things aright, how highly would they esteem this promise? How highly would a man value being if such favour with a king that he would give him any post that

he desired ! But if the favour of an earthly king is to be prized, how much more that of the King of Heaven !

But lest thou shouldst think that these are words and not deeds, look at the lives of the saints, and see what great things they achieved by prayer. What did Moses do in Egypt, and in all the journey through the desert by prayer? What did Elijah and Elisha, his disciple, accomplish by prayer? What miracles did not the Apostles work by prayer? With this weapon the saints fought, with this they overcame devils, with this they triumphed over the world, they became masters of nature, they turned the flames of fire into a pleasant coolness, they appeased the wrath of GOD, and obtained from Him all that they desired. It is written of the holy father, S. Dominic, that he told one of his friends, that he had never asked anything of our LORD without obtaining it. The friend desired him to ask GOD to give him, one Master Reginald, a celebrated man of that day, for a monk of his order. The holy man prayed for him that evening, and the next morning, as they were beginning the hymn at prime, "Jam lucis orto sidere," that new day-star entered the choir, and falling at the feet of the holy man, humbly asked him for the habit of the order. This is the reward promised to the obedience of the righteous, that as they are so faithful and obedient to the voice of GOD, He is so, in a manner, to their voice; that as they answer GOD when He calls them, He pays them by return of post, as we may say, in the same coin, answering to their call. And therefore Solomon says that "an obedient man shall speak of victories," (Prov. xxi. 28, Vulg.) for it is just that GOD should do the will of man, when man does the will of GOD.

But on the contrary, of the prayers of the wicked, GOD says, by Isaiah, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." (Isa. i. 15.) And by Jeremiah He threatens them, saying, "In the time of their trouble they will say—Arise, and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise if they can save thee in the time of trouble." (Jer. ii. 27, 28.) And in the book of holy Job it is written, "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when GOD

taketh away his soul? Will GOD hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him." And S. John says in his General Epistle, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards GOD. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 S. John iii. 21, 22.) In accordance with this, David says, "If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart the LORD will not hear me. But GOD hath heard me, and considered the voice of my prayer. (Ps. lxvi. 16, 17.)

There are innumerable passages like these in Holy Scripture, which serve to show the difference between the prayers of the good and those of the wicked; and in consequence the great advantage that the former enjoy, for they are heard and treated as sons, whilst the others are ordinarily rejected as enemies. For as their prayer is not accompanied with good works, nor with devotion and fervour of spirit, nor with charity and humility, it is no marvel that it is not heard, for as S. Cyprian says very well, the petition is inefficacious when the prayer is unfruitful. Nevertheless, though this is generally the case, yet the goodness and liberality of GOD are so great, that sometimes He hears the prayers even of the wicked, which although not meritorious, yet are impetratory, for, as S. Thomas says, merit proceeds from charity, but impetrating from the infinite goodness and mercy of GOD, Who sometimes hears the prayers of wicked men.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*The Tenth Privilege of Virtue : namely, the Help and Assistance that the Righteous receive from God in their Tribulations. And of the Impatience that torments the Wicked in their Troubles.*

VIRTUE has another marvellous privilege, that of obtaining for us strength to pass joyfully through the tribulations and miseries that cannot be wanting in this life. For we know that there is no sea so stormy and so unstable as this life ; in which there is no happiness that is secure against innumerable accidents and unexpected disasters, which continually beset us. And it is a thing to be noted how differently the good and the wicked endure these variations. For the good consider that they have GOD for their FATHER, and that it is He Who sends them that cup, as a medicine prepared by the hand of a most skilful Physician for their cure ; and that tribulation is like a file, and the sharper it is the more it cleanses the soul from the rust of vice ; and that it makes man more humble in his thoughts, more devout in his prayers, and more pure and clean in his conscience ; and with these and such like considerations, they bow their heads, and meekly humble themselves in the time of tribulation, and thus they temper their cup of suffering ; or rather GOD Himself tempers it for them, for, as the Prophet says, " He gives them tears to drink in measure." (Ps. lxxx. 5, Vulg. ; " in great measure," Bible version.) For no physician so carefully weighs out the doses of aloes that he gives to a sick man, and proportions them to his state, as that Heavenly Physician weighs out the aloes of tribulation, which He gives to



the righteous, and proportions them to their power of endurance. And if at times He increases the trouble, He increases also the strength to bear it, so that the more the man is afflicted, the more He is enriched, and thenceforward, instead of fleeing from affliction as a hurtful thing, he rather desires it as a most precious merchandise. Therefore good men often bear their troubles, not only with patience, but with joy; because they look not on the labour, but on the reward; not on the suffering, but on the crown; not on the bitterness of the medicine, but on the health to be gained thereby; not on the pain of the scourge, but on the love that sends it; for He has said that whom He loveth He chasteneth. (Heb. xii. 6.)

To all these considerations add that of the help of GOD'S grace, which, as I have said, never fails the righteous in the time of trouble. For GOD is a true and faithful Friend to His servants, and is never more present than in their tribulations, though He is then least seen. Look through all Holy Scripture and thou wilt find hardly anything promised and repeated oftener than this. Does He not say that He is "a defence for the oppressed, even a refuge in the time of trouble?" (Ps. ix. 9.) Does He not say, "Call upon Me in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me?" (Ps. l. 15.) Had not the Prophet proved this when he said, "Hear me when I call, O GOD of my righteousness; Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble." (Ps. iv. 1.) Was it not in Him that the Prophet trusted when he said, "I waited for Him Who delivered me from pusillanimity and from tempest?" (Ps. lv. 8, Vulg.) Not from the tempest of the sea most surely, but from that which arises in a pusillanimous spirit in time of trouble, a tempest whose rage is proportioned to the cowardice of the heart. And this he confirms with many repetitions, to assure us thoroughly of the truth, and to strengthen our weakness, saying, "The salvation of the righteous cometh of the LORD, Who is also their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall stand by them, and save them; He shall deliver them from the ungodly, and shall save them, because they put their trust in Him." (Ps. xxxvii. 40, 41.)

And elsewhere the Prophet speaks even more plainly, saying,

“O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men: Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues. Thanks be to the LORD, for He hath showed me marvellous great kindness in a strong city. And when I made haste, I said—I am cast out of the sight of Thine eyes.” (Ps. xxxi. 21–24.) Observe how plainly the Prophet shows us here how the righteous are helped by GOD in their bitterest tribulation. And note especially the words, “Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence.” On this a commentator remarks that, as earthly kings, if they wish to keep a man very securely, bring him into their own palace, that he may be defended from his enemies, not only by the royal walls, but also by the eyes of the king, so our Heavenly King guards His servants with equal care and forethought. And thus we see and read that holy men, surrounded by the greatest perils and temptations, have continued quiet and courageous in soul, and calm in countenance, knowing that they had this faithful Guardian, Who never forsook them, but was most present when He saw them in most danger. Thus He dealt with the Three Holy Children, whom Nebuchadnezzar commanded to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, with whom the Angel of the LORD walked in the midst of the fire, and made the flames like a moist whistling wind; insomuch that the tyrant himself “was astonished, and rose up in haste and said, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men, and the form of the fourth is like the SON of GOD.” (Dan. iii. 21, 24, 25; Song of the Three Children, 26, 27.) See how sure the company of the LORD is in the time of trouble? Nor is this truth less shown by the LORD’S dealings with holy Joseph, when he was sold by his brethren; for it is written, that “wisdom went down with him into the pit, and left him not in bonds, till she brought him the sceptre of the kingdom, and power against those that oppressed him; as for them that had accused him, she showed them to be liars, and gave him perpetual glory.” (Wis. x. 13, 14.) These examples manifestly declare to us the truth of GOD’S

promise by the Psalmist, "I am with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and bring him to honour." (Ps. xci. 15, 16.) Blessed, assuredly, is tribulation, which gains us such a companion. Let us all say with S. Bernard, "LORD, ever give me tribulations, that Thou mayest ever be with me."

To this is added the help of all the virtues which concur at such times to reinforce the afflicted heart, each with its own lance. For as all our blood gathers to the heart to succour it when it is in distress, and to save it from fainting, so when the soul is distressed and imperilled by some tribulation, all the virtues gather to assist it, each in its own way. For first comes faith, with its sure knowledge of the good and evil of the next life, compared with which all that can be suffered here is nothing. Then comes hope, which makes man contented in affliction, because they look for the reward. Then comes the love of GOD, for Whom they affectionately desire to suffer affliction and pain in this world. Then come obedience and conformity to the will of GOD, from Whose hand they take all that befalls them joyfully and uncomplainingly. Then comes patience, whose strength suffices to bear the burthen. Humility comes too, and makes them bow their hearts, like slender trees, before the furious gust of tribulation, and humble themselves under the mighty hand of GOD, acknowledging always that what they suffer is less than their offences deserve. There comes also to help them the consideration of the sufferings of CHRIST crucified, and of those of the saints, compared with which all that we suffer is nothing.

Thus all the virtues aid with their several offices, and not with deeds only, but, if we may say so, with words. For faith tells us "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) And gratitude says with holy Job, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of GOD, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job ii. 10.) And repentance says, "It is right that he should suffer somewhat against his own will, who has done so much against the will of GOD." And fidelity says, "It is just that He should find us faithful once in our life, who has done so much for us throughout the whole of it." And patience

says, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." (Rom. v. 3-5.) And obedience says, "There is no greater holiness, no greater sacrifice, than for a man to conform himself entirely in all afflictions to the good pleasure of the Divine Will."

But of all these virtues, a lively hope most especially helps us at this time, and keeps our heart firm and constant in the midst of tribulation. The Apostle declared this to us, when after saying, "Rejoicing in hope," he immediately added, "Patient in tribulation," (Rom. xii. 12), knowing very well that one would follow from the other; from the joy of hope, the strength of patience. And therefore also the Apostle calls it "an anchor," (Heb. vi. 19.); for, as an anchor fixed in the earth secures the ship in the water, and makes it despise the waves and the storm, so does a lively hope firmly fixed on the promises of heaven keep the soul of the righteous man unmoved amidst the waves and storms of this world, and enable it to despise all the fury of its winds and tempests. This was the case with a holy man, of whom it is related, that when he was surrounded with troubles, he said, "The good for which I hope is so great, that all pain delights me."

Thus all the virtues come to comfort the good man's heart when he is in trouble. And if he is still dismayed, they turn upon him with greater warmth, and say, "If in the time of trial, when GOD is pleased to prove thee, thou faintest, where is the lively faith that thou oughtest to have in Him? Where is thy charity, thy fortitude, thy obedience, thy patience, thy faithfulness, thy hope and thy strength? Is it for this that thou didst so often prepare and resolve? Is it this that thou didst so often desire and even ask of GOD? Remember that, being a good Christian consists not merely in praying, fasting, and communicating, but in being found faithful by GOD, as Job and Abraham were, in time of tribulation." Thus the righteous man, by the help of his considerations and of the virtues, together with the assistance of GOD's grace, which never forsakes him, bears these burthens, not only with patience, but often with joy and thankfulness. For a proof of this, we will content ourselves at

present with the example of holy Tobit, of whom it is written that when, in addition to many other afflictions, GOD permitted him to lose his sight, he was not discouraged, nor lost his faith and obedience. And Scripture proceeds to declare the cause of this, saying, "For as he had always served the LORD from childhood, and had kept His Commandments, he grieved not against GOD when the plague of blindness came upon him, but remained unchangeable in the fear of GOD, giving thanks to Him all the days of his life." (Tobit ii. 13, 14, Vulg.) See how distinctly the HOLY GHOST attributes this holy man's patience in affliction to his virtue and fear of GOD, agreeably to what we have said. And I might bring forward many illustrious examples of great diseases and afflictions most joyfully borne, in our own times, by GOD's servants, who have found gall in honey, and calm in tempests, and refreshing coolness in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

But, on the contrary, what a spectacle are the wicked in tribulation? Having no charity, no patience, no fortitude, no lively hope, nor any of the kindred virtues, being found by affliction unarmed and unprepared, having no light to see what the righteous see with certain faith, no lively hope wherewith to embrace it, not having known, by experience, GOD's fatherly goodness and providence towards His servants, it is a pitiable thing to see them drowning in this gulf, unable to find anything whereon they may set a foot or lay a hand. For, lacking all this help, sailing without this helm, fighting without these weapons, what can be expected, but that they must perish in the storm, and die in the battle? What can be expected but that the raging winds and waves of affliction shall dash them on the rocks of anger and fury, of pusillanimity, of impatience, of blasphemy, and of despair? And thus some have lost their reason, their health, their life, or at least their sight, with continual weeping. So that the righteous, like fine silver, continue whole and entire in the fire of tribulation, whilst the wicked, like worthless dross, melt, and are consumed with the heat. And therefore the wicked weep, where the righteous sing; the wicked are drowned, where the righteous go over dry shod; the wicked, like a worthless vessel of clay, burst in the fire, whilst

the righteous, like fine gold, become more pure and beautiful. Thus "the voice of joy and gladness is" always "heard in the dwellings of the righteous" (Ps. cxviii. 15), but cries of grief and confusion resound in the houses of the wicked.

If thou wouldst understand this plainly, look at the extremes that women of the highest rank have done, and do continually, when they lose their children or their husbands ; how they shut themselves up in places where they can never again see sun or moon ; how they throw themselves into the fire, or dash their heads against the wall with rage and abhorrence of life, and sometimes end their lives very speedily with impatience and vehement sorrow, and thus a house and family is left desolate and destroyed in one moment. And what is more, they are not only cruel and unreasonable towards themselves, but also insolent and blasphemous towards GOD, accusing His providence, condemning His justice, blaspheming His mercy, and lifting up their sacrilegious mouth to heaven against GOD. But it rains down upon them again in yet greater calamities sent by GOD for these blasphemies, the well-deserved reward of those who scoff at heaven, and kick against the pricks. And this is often a most just cure from the hand of GOD, Who diverts their hearts from great afflictions by others that are greater.

Thus these miserable men, not having the helm of virtue, are tossed about by the tempest, blaspheming when they ought to give thanks, puffed up by what ought to humble them, hardened by chastisement, and more diseased by medicine. Hell is in a manner begun for them, in preparation for another hell that awaits them. For hell is nothing else than a place of pain and crime, and both so abound here that I ask wherein the two differ.

And how sad it is to see that when the afflictions must be endured, and, if taken patiently, are both easier to bear, and more meritorious for the soul, yet wretched man chooses to lose the inestimable fruit of patience, and to make his load heavier by the affliction of impatience, which itself is heavier than all the rest. It is a miserable thing to work and gain nothing by our labour, and to have no one to pay us ; but it is incompar-

ably worse to lose what we have gained, and, after a weary night, to find that we have forfeited our reward.

All this declares to us how differently the righteous and the wicked pass through tribulation; what peace, gladness, and courage the first have, and what misery and disquiet the others suffer. This was marvellously figured in the "great cry" and "lamentable noise that were made in Egypt" when "the LORD smote all their first-born in one night, (Exod. xii. 29, 30; Wis. xviii. 10), whilst in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt, there did not so much as a dog move his tongue. (Exod. xi. 7.)

But, besides this peace, what shall I say of the good that the righteous gain from their tribulations, from which the wicked get nothing but evil? For, as S. Chrysostom says, even as gold is purified and wood is consumed by the same fire, so in the fire of tribulation the righteous become more beautiful, like gold, whilst the wicked, like dry and unfruitful wood, is burnt to ashes. And S. Cyprian says, in like manner, that as the wind from the winnowing fan drives away and scatters the light chaff, but thereby cleanses the wheat and leaves it purified, so the wind of tribulation scatters and drives away the wicked like chaff, whilst it gathers up and purifies the righteous like good grain. This is also represented in a figure by the waters of the Red Sea, which not only did not drown the children of Israel when they passed through them, but "were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left;" whilst these same waters overthrew the Egyptians, "and covered the chariots, and the horse-men, and all the host of Pharaoh." (Exod. xiv. 27-29.) So are the waters of tribulation a defence and protection to the good, serving to maintain and exercise their humility and patience, but to the wicked they are like waves and storms to swallow and drown them in the abyss of impatience, of blasphemy, and of despair.

This then is another marvellous advantage that virtue has over vice; and for this philosophers have greatly praised and honoured philosophy, believing that that alone could make man constant in afflictions. But they were greatly deceived in this, as in other things. For true virtue and true constancy are not

found among philosophers, but in the school of that Master, Who, nailed to the cross, comforts us with His example, reigning in heaven strengthens us with His Spirit, and promising us glory animates us with hope; things in which all human philosophy is deficient.



## CHAPTER XXII.

*The Eleventh Privilege of Virtue, namely, how our Lord provides the Virtuous with temporal Things.*

**W**E have hitherto spoken only of the spiritual treasures and riches that are given to the lovers of virtue in this life, in addition to the everlasting glory that is laid up for them in the life to come. All these things were promised to the world at CHRIST'S coming, as all the Scriptures of the Prophets do testify, and He is therefore rightly called the SAVIOUR of the World. For by Him is given to us true salvation, that is, grace, and wisdom, and peace, and victory, and dominion over our passions, and the comfort of the HOLY GHOST, and the riches of hope, and every thing that is necessary for the attainment of that salvation, of which the Prophet said, "Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation." (Isa. xlv. 17.)

But if any man be so carnal that he looks rather on the things of the flesh than on those of the spirit, as the Jews did, we need not disagree about this, for we will give him a much more favourable answer than he can desire, else what did the Wise Man mean by saying, of true Wisdom, wherein is the perfection of virtue, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." (Prov. iii. 16.) She has then two sorts of benefits to offer to men, everlasting things in one hand, temporal things in the other. Think not that GOD will let His servants die of want, or that He who feeds the ants and worms of the earth is so scant of means as to let them hunger who serve Him day and night in His house. If thou wilt not believe it on my word, read the whole of the sixth chapter of S.

Matthew, and see the assurance and securities that are given thee. "Behold the fowls of the air," saith the SAVIOUR, "for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly FATHER feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" And, after more to this purpose, He ends by saying, "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your Heavenly FATHER knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (S. Matt. vi. 25-33.) The Psalmist sets this inducement among others before us to lead us to serve GOD, seeing that for this alone men bind themselves to serve their fellow-men. He says, "O fear the LORD, ye that are His saints, for they that fear Him lack nothing. The lions ("rich," Vulg.), do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the LORD shall want no manner of thing that is good." (Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10.) And so certain a fact is this, that the same Prophet says, moreover, in another Psalm, "I have been young, and now am old; and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." (Ps. xxxvii. 25.)

But if thou wouldst see at greater length what abundant stores of this kind the righteous possess, hear what GOD promises in Deuteronomy to those who keep His law. "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy GOD, to observe and do all His commandments . . . the LORD thy GOD will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come upon thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee

in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and He shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy GOD, and walk in His ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the Name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee His good treasure, the heaven to give the rain to thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand." (Deut. xxviii. 1-12.) These are the words of GOD by His Prophet. Say now, what Indies, what treasures can be compared to these blessings?"

And though these promises were given rather to the Jewish nation than to Christians, for GOD has promised by Ezekiel to enrich these last with greater treasures, (Ezek. xxxiv. 36, &c.), the treasures of grace and glory, yet as under that carnal law GOD gave spiritual gifts also to good Jews, so under this spiritual law He gives also temporal prosperity to good Christians, and this prosperity He gives with a twofold advantage, unknown to the wicked. First, as a most wise Physician, He gives them in such measure as their necessities require, that they may be so sustained as not to be puffed up. It is different with the wicked, who grasp all that they can, without considering that an excess of temporal goods does no less harm to the soul, than an excess of sustenance to the body. For though eating is necessary to sustain life, yet too much eating is destructive to life. So also the life of man is in his blood, and yet a superfluity of blood often kills a man. The other advantage is that with less outward show He gives them more rest and more contentment, the very end for which men seek after temporal things. For all that He can do by means of temporal things, He can do even more perfectly by Himself without them. And this He does for all the saints, in whose name the Apostle spake, when He said, "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things," (2 Cor. vi. 10); that is, being as contented with a little as if we had dominion

over all the world. Travellers seek to take their money in gold, that they may be at once rich and not burthened; so our LORD loves to provide for His children, and to relieve them, giving them a light burthen, and great satisfaction. Thus the righteous journey, naked and content, poor and rich, whilst the wicked, loaded with riches and famishing with hunger, are like Tantalus in the legend, ready to die of thirst with the water at his lips.

For this and such like causes the great Prophet so strongly urges us to keep GOD'S law, and desires us to make that our only care, for he knew very well that when we do that we have done all. And therefore he says, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deut. vi. 6-9.) And thou shalt "do them in the land whither ye go to possess it, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged." (Deut. vi. 1, 2.) O holy Prophet, what didst thou see and find in the keeping of these Divine commandments, that thou didst so strongly urge it? Truly, as a great Prophet, to whom GOD'S counsels had been made known, thou knewest its inestimable value, thou knewest that it contains in itself all good, present and future, temporal and eternal, spiritual and corporal, thou knewest that if this obligation is fulfilled, all is fulfilled. Thou knewest that when a man is occupied in doing GOD'S will, he loses no time thereby; but that his vineyard is dug, his garden watered, his property cultivated, and his business attended to far better than if he did them with his own hand, for he makes it GOD'S affair to do them with His. For it is the law of GOD'S covenant and agreement with man, that if the man will be careful to keep GOD'S commands, GOD will be careful to keep all that belongs to the man, and it is certain that the contract will not be broken on GOD'S side; but that if a man is a good servant, He will be a better Master. This is the "one thing" that our LORD said was need-

ful, (S. Luke x. 42.) the knowledge and love of GOD ; for when we have satisfied with GOD, we have nothing else to fear. "Godliness," S. Paul tells us, "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) See how distinctly the Apostle here promises to godliness, that is, to the worship and veneration of GOD, not only the good things of the life to come, but also those of that which now is, as far as they will help to the attainment of the other. But this is no excuse why a man should not labour and do his own part, according to the state of life to which he is called.

If thou wouldst know, on the other hand, what great adversities, what calamities and misery are laid up for the wicked, read the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and thou wilt find abundant cause for terror and amazement. These are but a part of the words, "If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy GOD, to observe to do all His commandments, all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until He hath consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew ; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust : from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies : thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them : and shalt be removed into all the

nations of the earth. And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. . . . The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart : and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways : and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her : thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein : thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof : thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee. . . . Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long : and there shall be no might in thine hand. . . . The LORD shall bring thee . . . unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known. . . . Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee." (Deut. xxviii. 15-37.) And at the end, after many other very terrible curses, he concludes thus, "Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed. . . . Because thou servedst not the LORD thy GOD with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things ; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things : and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth ; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand ; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young : and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed : which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or the flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come

down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land. . . . And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters, which the LORD thy GOD hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee." (Deut. xxviii. 45-53.) All these are words of Holy Scripture, and I have omitted many more. If thou wilt read them attentively, thou must be astonished and amazed at such terrible things, and then perchance thou wilt open thine eyes, and begin to understand something of the dreadful severity of GOD'S justice, and of the horrible evil of sin, and of GOD'S extreme hatred for it ; and by the great punishments with which He visits it in this life, thou mayest see what is to be expected in the next. And thou wilt pity the miserable senselessness of the wicked, who live in such blindness, and know not what awaits them.

And think not that these threats are only words, for all this passage is not so much a threat as a prophecy of the calamities that befell that people. For in the time of Ahab, king of Israel, when Samaria was besieged by the king of Syria's army, we read that men ate dove's dung, and even that it was sold for a great sum of money ; nay, mothers killed their sons to eat them (2 Kings vi. 25, 28, 29), and Josephus writes that the same thing occurred in the siege of Jerusalem. And the captivities of this people, with the utter destruction of their kingdom and nation, are well known. For the eleven tribes were carried away by the king of Assyria into perpetual captivity, from which they never returned ; and the one tribe that remained was long afterwards destroyed and rased to the ground by the Romans, when great numbers were taken captive, and far greater slain, as the same historian relates.

Nor let any man deceive himself by thinking that these calamities belonged to that people alone, for they belong to all people, who have the Law of GOD, and disregard and break it, as He Himself testifies by Amos, saying, " Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt ? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir ? Behold, the eyes of the LORD GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth." (Amos ix. 7, 8.) Here He

gives us to understand that all these changes of nations, the destruction of some, and the planting in of others, are done because of sin. If thou wouldst see whether this concerns us, look at past histories, and thou wilt see that GOD deals according to one rule with all the wicked, and especially with those who have the true Law, and do not keep it. For thou wilt see how large a part of Christendom, which was once full of Churches, is now possessed by heathen barbarians. Thou wilt see what destructions the Church has suffered by the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals, who destroyed the whole province of Africa, in S. Augustine's time, sparing neither man nor woman, neither old man, nor boy, nor maiden. And at that time the kingdom of Dalmatia, and the neighbouring regions, were so devastated by those barbarians, that S. Jerome, who was a native of that province, said that those who passed through saw nothing but earth and sky, so utter was the desolation.

This shows us that virtue and true religion not only serve to obtain everlasting things, but also keep us from losing those which are temporal. And let this consideration, and those we have spoken of before, help to attach our hearts to virtue, which frees us from so much evil, and is accompanied by so much good.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

*The Twelfth Privilege of Virtue : namely, how calm and joyful is the Death of the Righteous ; and, on the contrary, how sad and grievous is that of the Wicked.*

TO all these privileges is added the last of all, namely, the glorious death and end of the righteous, to which all the others lead up. There is a saying, that we sing the glory at the end. Can any end be more glorious than that of the righteous, or more wretched than that of the wicked? "Right dear in the sight of the LORD," says a certain Psalm, "is the death of His saints;" (Ps. cxvi. 13,) but another Psalm says that "The death of the ungodly is worst;" (Ps. xxxiv. 21, Vulg.,) that is, bad in a most superlative degree, because both to the body and to the soul it is the greatest of all evils. And S. Bernard speaks thus on the words, "The death of the ungodly is worst;" it is bad by reason of the separation from the world, worse because of the separation from the body, and worst because of the everlasting torments of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched. (S. Mark ix. 44.) For it is great pain to leave the world, and greater to leave the flesh, but far greater is the torment of hell.

All these things together torment the wicked man at that time, and not these things alone. For he is troubled by the circumstances of his disease, by pain of body, by fears in the soul, by grief for what remains, by anxiety for what is to come, by the remembrance of his past sins, by dread of the future account, by fear of the sentence, by the gloom of the sepulchre, by the separation from all that he loves excessively, that is,

from his property, his friends, his wife, his children, this common light and air, and his own life. For the more he loved each one of these things the more does it pain him. For, as S. Augustine says, a thing that we possess with love we lose not without pain. And, therefore, a philosopher has said that he least fears death who has fewest pleasures in life.

But more than all these things does the torment of a bad conscience, together with the fear of what awaits him, torment the wicked man at this hour. For he is then awakened by the presence of death, and opens his eyes, and sees what he never saw in his life. Eusebius Emisenus explains the reason of this in a homily, saying, that at that hour all care of laying up wealth and of seeking necessaries for life ceases, together with all ambition for honours and lands; all occupation has passed away, whether of labour, of war, or aught else, and the thought of the account to come alone occupies the soul. Then the wretched man, having life behind his back, and death before his eyes, forgets the present which he is leaving, and thinks of the future that awaits him. Now he sees that his pleasures have come to an end, and that the sins that he committed to obtain them alone remain for GOD'S judgment. The same Doctor, in another homily, speaks thus on the same subject—"Think what will be the wails of the negligent soul when it leaves this life. What anguish, what gloom, what darkness when it sees its own conscience come forth foremost of all the adversaries that surround it, and followed by a train of sins! For conscience has but to offer itself to our eyes, and we shall be convicted and confounded by its evidence without further proof. It will be impossible to hide anything from ourselves, or to deny it, because the accusing witness comes not from afar or from without, but from within ourselves." These are the words of Eusebius.

But Cardinal Peter Damiani pursues this subject at greater length, and more excellently, speaking thus, "Let us consider very attentively when the soul of a sinner is coming forth from the prison-house of the flesh, by what violent terrors it is attacked, with how many stings of accusing conscience it is pricked. It remembers the sins committed, it sees GOD'S

commandments despised, it mourns for the time of repentance vainly wasted, it grieves to see the inevitable instant of account, and of GOD'S revenge arrive. It would fain stay, and it must go; it would regain what it has lost, and there is not time. It looks back, and beholds the whole course of its past life, which seems but a very short instant. It looks forward, and sees an endless eternity waiting it. It weeps to see that it has lost everlasting joy, which might have been gained in that little instant. It grieves because it has lost everlasting and perpetual sweetness, for transient sensual fleshly pleasures. It is ashamed when it considers that for a substance that is to be the food of worms, it has despised one that was made to dwell among the companies of the Angels. And considering the glory of those unending treasures, it is full of confusion at having lost them for miserable temporal things. And when it looks down on the dark valley of this world, and sees above it the brightness of everlasting light, it perceives evidently that all that it loved in this world was night and darkness. Oh, if a man could now obtain time for repentance, how hard a life would he embrace, what great things would he promise, how many vows and obligations would he undertake!

“But whilst he is revolving these things in his heart, the messengers and forerunners of death begin to appear, the eyes grow dim and sunken, the breast heaves, the voice becomes hoarse, the limbs stiffen, the teeth turn black, the tongue and palate are foul, the colour of the face is changed. And while these things are occurring, as preparation for approaching death, all the deeds, words, and thoughts of his wicked life past present themselves before his wretched soul, and give testimony against him. Vainly would he look away: he must see them in order.

“Now are gathered together on one side the horrible assemblage of devils, on the other, the glorious company of Angels. And the man begins to discern which of these two parties will carry off the spoil. For if works of piety and virtue are found in him, he is immediately comforted with the feast and banquet of the Angels. But if his vile demerits and wicked life forbid this, he shudders with intolerable fear and terror; he is cast down

headlong, seized, torn from his wretched flesh, and carried away into everlasting torments." All this is from S. Peter Damiani. This is true, and this must be. Can any one possessed of reason require more to show how miserable the lot of the wicked is, and how careful he must be to avoid it, seeing that so wretched and disastrous an end awaits them ?

And if the things of this life could help us at all at that time, as they do at all others, it would not be so bad. But what must I say? That none of them avail us then, for most assuredly honours profit not then, riches defend not, friends cannot protect, nor servants follow, nor high birth assist, nor estates aid us, nor can anything avail us but virtue and innocence of life. For, as the wise man says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness," which is the same as virtue, "delivereth from death." (Prov. xi. 4.) When the wicked man finds himself in such poverty, and entirely deprived of this help, how will he tremble and be in anguish at seeing himself alone and friendless before the judgment of GOD.

But how free is the death of the righteous from all these evils ! for as the wicked here receives the punishment of his wickedness, so does the good man obtain the reward of his merits, as it is said in Ecclesiasticus, "Whoso feareth the LORD, it shall go well with him at the last, and he shall find favour in the day of his death," (Ecclus. i. 13) ; that is, he shall then be enriched and rewarded for his labours. And the Apostle S. John signifies this more clearly in the Apocalypse, saying, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me—Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.) Having this promise from GOD, how can the righteous man feel dismay when he is about to receive what he has been seeking all his life ? It is written in the Book of Job, "Thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day ; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning." (Job xi. 17.) On these words S. Gregory says that the evening of a good man's days is "clearer than the noon-day," because at the hour of his death he beholds the glory that is prepared for him ; and therefore, at the time when others are sad and dismayed, GOD

is his trust and comfort. Solomon testifies the same in his Proverbs, saying, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness : but the righteous hath hope in his death." (Prov. xiv. 32.)

Could there be greater confidence than that of the blessed S. Martin at the hour of his death, when he saw the devil, and spoke these words, "What doest thou here, beast of blood? Thou shalt find in me no dead thing whereon to feed, and therefore Abraham's bosom shall receive me in peace." Could there be greater confidence than that of our father S. Dominic in the same emergency, when he comforted and encouraged his brethren, who were weeping for his departure and their own loss, saying, "Be not distressed, my children; for I shall be of more use to you in the place whither I am going?" Could he be distressed or fear death who accounted glory so surely his own, that he hoped to obtain it not only for himself, but also for his children?

The righteous then have no occasion to fear death; they die praising and thanking GOD for their decease, in which all their troubles end and their happiness begins. And so S. Augustine says, on the Epistle of S. John, "of one who desires to depart and to be with CHRIST, we say not that he dies with resignation, but that he lives with resignation, and dies with joy." A good man has no occasion to grieve and to fear death; it may rather be said that he dies singing like the swan, giving thanks to GOD for his call. He fears not death, because he feared GOD, and the man who fears Him has nothing else to fear. He fears not death, because he feared life; and fear of death is the effect of a bad life. He fears not death, because he has spent his whole life in learning and preparing to die, and one who is well prepared has no occasion to fear his enemy. He fears not death, because the only occupation of his life has been to seek helpers and defenders in this hour, namely, virtues and good works. He fears not death, because he has gained over the Judge and obtained His favour, by many services done to Him. And lastly, he fears not death, because to a good man death is not death, but a sleep; it is not death, but a change; it is not death, but the end of toil; it is not death, but the way to life, the ladder to immortality; for he knows that since death has passed by

the Well-Spring of Life, it has lost the savour of death, and obtained the sweetness of life.

Nor is he dismayed at the circumstances that accompany his departure, for he knows that they are but travail pains with which he is born to eternity, for love of which he has always desired death, and endured life. He is not dismayed at the remembrance of his sins, because he has CHRIST for his Redeemer, (1 Pet. i. 18, 19), Whom he ever sought to please ; nor at the severity of GOD'S Judgment, because he has Him for an Advocate, (1 John ii. 1) ; nor at the presence of the devils, because he has Him for a Captain (Heb. ii. 10) ; nor at the darkness of the grave, because his natural body is there sown, to be raised a spiritual body. (1 Cor. xv. 44.) Seeing then that the Glory is not sung till the end, and that, as Seneca well says, the last day is judge of all the rest, and gives sentence on our whole past life, justifying or condemning every one of its actions, and that the end of good men is so quiet and peaceful, while that of the wicked is so grievous and so perilous, is anything more needed to make us loathe a bad life, and choose a good one? (Wisd. v.) What is the value of all the pleasures, all the prosperity, all the wealth, all the indulgences, all the power in the world, if in the end we are cast into hell? And what harm can all the miseries of this life do me, if I end it in peace and tranquillity, and with a sure hope of future glory? Let the wicked man be as clever as he will, in knowing how to live, to what does his knowledge serve, but to get things that make him more proud, more vain, more self-indulgent, more powerful for evil, more incapable for good, and that embitter death as much as they sweeten life? If a reasonable man is to be found on earth, he will best show his sense by making his life a preparation for its conclusion, for the chief proof of wisdom is to know how to adapt means to their end. He is a wise physician who knows how to give the right medicine for health, the object of all medicine ; and he is perfectly and absolutely wise who knows how to live rightly with a view to death, that is, to the account to be given at death, which should be the object of our whole life.

These then, my Brother, are the twelve privileges that are

granted to virtue in this life, the twelve fruits, as it were, of the Tree, that S. John saw in the Apocalypse, that was planted beside a river, and bare twelve manner of fruits in the year, according to the number of its months. (Rev. xxii. 2.) For what can be signified by this Tree, after the SON of GOD, but virtue, which is the tree that bears fruits of holiness and of life? And what fruits can be more precious than those of which we have spoken? What fruits can be fairer than GOD'S fatherly care for His servants (Ch. xii.), and His Divine Grace (Ch. xiv.), and Wisdom to enlighten us (Ch. xv.), and the Comfort of the HOLY GHOST (Ch. xvi.), and the joy of a good conscience (Ch. xvii.), and hope to strengthen us (Ch. xviii.), and true freedom of spirit (Ch. xix.), and inward peace of heart (Ch. xx.), and to be heard in our prayers (Ch. xxi.), and helped in our tribulations (Ch. xxii.), and provided for in our temporal necessities (Ch. xxiii.), and gladdened at last by a happy death (Ch. xxiv.) Truly each of these is so great a privilege, that if a man could fully comprehend it, that one alone would make him choose virtue, and change his life, and he would understand how truly our SAVIOUR spoke when He said that whosoever forsook the world for His sake should receive "an hundred-fold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." (S. Mark x. 30.)

Behold now, then, my Brother, the treasure which we offer thee. Couldst thou complain of loss wert thou to leave everything in the world for it? It has but one defect, if it is a defect, which hinders it from being prized by the wicked, and that is, that it is unknown to them. And therefore the SAVIOUR said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like hid treasure. (S. Matt. xiii. 44.) For, indeed, it is a treasure, and a treasure hidden from others, not from its owner. The Prophet well knew the worth of this treasure when he said, "My secret to me, my secret to me." (Isa. xxiv. 16, margin.) It signified little to him whether others knew the greatness of this treasure, for it is unlike all other treasures, which are worthless as long as they are concealed, because their worth consists not in themselves, but in the value set upon them by the world, and therefore they must be known by the world before they can be truly called treasures.

But this treasure makes its owner rich in goodness and in joy, and warms his heart no less when it is known to him alone than if all the world knew it.

But the key of this secret is not my tongue, nor is it all that I have said, for all that can be told by mortal tongue is little compared to the reality. The key is light from GOD, with the experience and practice of virtue. Ask this of the LORD, and thou wilt immediately find this treasure, and thou wilt find GOD Himself, and in Him thou wilt find all things, and wilt see with how much reason the Prophet said, "Blessed are the people who have the LORD for their GOD." (Ps. cxliv. 15.) It is written in the First Book of Samuel that Elkanah, Samuel's father, when he saw his wife Hannah weeping because she had no children, said to her, "Hannah, why weepest thou? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" (1 Sam. i. 8.) If a good husband, who to-day is, and to-morrow is not, is better to his wife than ten sons, how much better thinkest thou that GOD is to the soul that indeed possesses Him. What are you doing, O men? where are you going? what are you seeking? Why do you leave the fountain of paradise for the dirty puddles of this world? (Jer. ii. 13.) Why do you not follow the wise advice of the Prophet, "O taste and see how gracious the LORD is?" (Ps. xxxiv. 8.) Will you not test this ford? Will you not taste this meat? Trust in the LORD's word, and begin; you will soon know the truth by experience. Moses' rod that became a serpent appeared terrible when beheld from a distance, but when he took it in his hand, it became a harmless rod again. And Solomon's words are not unmeaning, "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." (Prov. xx. 14.) For this is what men do every day; at first they know not the value of their purchase, because they are not spiritual, and they regret what they have to give for it, because they are carnal, and therefore they think the price that is asked of them very high. But when they begin to taste how sweet the LORD is, they boast of their purchase, and think no price too high for such a treasure. How joyfully did the man in the Gospel sell all that he had to buy the field in which he had found the treasure.

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(S. Matt. xiii. 44.) And will not a Christian, when he hears that word, desire to know what the treasure is! It is a most strange thing that if some deceiver assured thee that there was a great treasure hidden in some part of thy land, thou wouldst not fail to dig and search if it was true; but when GOD'S Word assures thee that there is an unequalled treasure within thee, (S. Luke xvii. 21,) thy heart is not lifted up to seek it. Oh, that thou knewest how far more certain this intelligence is, how far greater this treasure! Oh, that thou knewest in how few spade-strokes thou wouldst find it! Oh, that thou didst understand how nigh the LORD is unto all such as call upon Him faithfully! (Ps. cxlv. 18.) How many men have there been in the world who have repented of their sins, and perseveringly asked forgiveness, and in less than a week's navigation have discovered land, or rather have found a new heaven and a new earth, and have begun to discern the Kingdom of GOD within them! And is it surprising that He should do this who has said that when a sinner repents, none of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him? (Ezek. xxxiii. 16.) Is it surprising that He should do this who did not let the prodigal son finish the short prayer that he intended, but fell on his neck, and received him with rejoicing? (S. Luke xv.) Turn then, my Brother, to this compassionate Father; rise up early a little while, and persevere for some days in knocking at the door of His mercy; and be assured that if thou perseverest humbly, He will answer thee at last, and make known to thee the hid treasures of His love; and when thou hast tasted it, thou wilt say with the bride in the Song of Songs, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Cant. viii. 7.)

## CHAPTER XXIV.

*Against the First Excuse : that of those who defer a Change of Life and the Practice of Virtue to a Future Day.*

WHAT we have already said is enough, and more than enough, no doubt, for the object we chiefly desire : that of inclining the hearts of men under the influence of Divine grace, to the love and pursuit of virtue. But though this is most certain truth, yet the wickedness of man lacks not excuses and a show of reason to defend and comfort him in his misdeeds, as the son of Sirach affirms, saying, "A sinful man will not be reprov'd, but findeth an excuse according to his will." (Ecclus. xxxii. 17.) Solomon says, moreover, "He that separateth himself from his friend, seeketh according to his desire, and intermeddleth in every business." (Prov. xviii. 1, margin.) Even so do the wicked seek pretences for separating themselves from GOD, each man bringing forward his own especial excuse. Some defer this business to a future day, others reserve it for the hour of their death ; some say that they dread the undertaking, because it appears too hard ; others, that they comfort themselves with the hope of GOD'S mercy, thinking to be saved by faith and hope alone, without charity ; whilst others are entangled in the love of the world, and will not leave the happiness that they possess in it for that which is promised by GOD'S Word. These are the commonest delusions and deceits with which the enemy of the human race bewilders men's minds, and keeps them almost all their life in bondage to their sin, so that death may surprise them in this miserable state, taking them in the fact. We will expose all these delusions in this last part of the Book,

beginning with those who put off the matter to another time, which is the commonest of all mistakes.

There are some, then, who acknowledge that all we have said is truth, and that the side of virtue is the safest, they say that they will not fail to attach themselves to it; but a time will come when they can do it better and more easily. In this manner, S. Augustine writes that he replied to GOD before his conversion, saying, "Wait a little, LORD, wait a little longer, soon I will leave the world, soon I will depart from sin." Thus do the wicked continually procrastinate with GOD, daily fixing times, and daily breaking their appointments, and the time of their conversion never comes.

That this is a manifest deception of that old serpent, to whom it is no new thing to lie and deceive men, would not be hard to prove, and the whole controversy would come to an end, if there were nothing else to decide. For we know assuredly that the thing every Christian man most ought to desire is his salvation, and that conversion and amendment of life are necessary to obtain it, for there is no salvation without these. It remains, then, that we see when this conversion and amendment are to be, for we have only to inquire about the time, there is no dispute about anything else. Thou sayest hereafter; I say immediately. Thou sayest that it will be easier at a future day; I say that it will be easier now. Let us see which is right.

But before we speak of the easiness of conversion, tell me, I pray, who assures thee that thou wilt live to that future day? How many thinkest thou have been deceived by this hope? S. Gregory says, "GOD, Who has promised forgiveness to the sinner who repents, has never promised him a to-morrow." And to the same purpose Cesarius says, "Will any one say, When old age comes, I will have recourse to the medicine of penitence? How can human weakness have the audacity to presume on this, seeing that it is not sure of a single day?" I verily believe that the souls that have been lost in this way are innumerable. It was so, undoubtedly, that the rich man in the Gospel was lost. S. Luke writes of him, that his ground brought forth plentifully, "and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But whilst the wretched man was reckoning on this, he heard a voice which said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (S. Luke xii. 16-20.) What greater folly can there be than for a man to dispose of the future by his own authority, as if he had dominion over the times and the seasons which the Eternal FATHER hath placed in His own power. And when S. John has said of the SON alone, that He hath the keys of life and death (Rev. i. 18, "hell and death"), to shut and open to whom He wills, and when He wills, how can a vile worm dare arrogate to himself and usurp this great power? Such presumption alone deserves this penalty (for fools must learn wisdom by punishment), that the man who refused to make use of the time that GOD gave him, shall have no future time for repentance.

Now, seeing that so many are punished in this way, the wisest course is to learn by the experience of others, and to obtain safety from their dangers, following the wise advice of the son of Sirach, "Make no tarrying to turn to the LORD, and put not off from day to day : for suddenly shall the wrath of the LORD come forth, and in thy security shalt thou be destroyed, and perish in the day of vengeance." (Ecclus. v. 7.)

But even if we grant that thy life will be as long as thou fanciest, which is easiest, to begin its amendment at once, or to leave it for the future? To see this more clearly, we will set down shortly the chief causes from which the difficulty proceeds. It arises, then, not from the impediments and hindrances that men imagine, but from the evil habits and customs of their wicked lives past, to change which, is, as people say, as hard as death. S. Jerome says, that a long habit of sin makes the path of virtue rough and hard to us. For habit is a second nature, and therefore to prevail against it is to overcome nature itself, which is the greatest of all victories. S. Bernard says also that when a vice has been strengthened by habit for many years, an especial and almost miraculous assistance of Divine grace is

needful to overcome it. Therefore a Christian ought greatly to fear a habit of any vice, for as prescription is valid in the matter of property, so is it after a manner in that of vice. And when a vice has obtained prescription, it is very difficult to eject it, except, as S. Bernard here says, by very especial help from GOD.

This difficulty arises also from the power of the devil who has especial dominion over the soul that is in sin : for he is the "strong man armed," (S. Luke xi. 21), in the Gospel, who keeps diligent care over all his possessions. It arises also from GOD'S departure from the soul that is in sin : for He is the watchman that is always set upon the walls of Jerusalem, (Isa. xxvi. 1., lxii. 6), and He departs further from the sinner in proportion as he is more full of sins. And from His departure arise great miseries in the soul, as the LORD signified when He said by a prophet, "Woe unto them ! for they have fled from Me." (Hos. vii. 13.) Whilst in another chapter He says, "Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them !" (Hos. ix. 12.) And this is the second woe whereof S. John makes mention in the Apocalypse. (Rev. xi. 14.)

This difficulty arises lastly from the corruption of the powers of our soul, which are greatly injured and degraded by sin, not in themselves, indeed, but in their operations and effects. For as wine is spoilt by vinegar, and fruit by the worm, and everything by its opposite, as we said above, so also all the powers and faculties of our souls are degraded by sin, its greatest enemy and opposite. For by sin the understanding is darkened, the will is enfeebled, the appetite is disordercd, the freedom is diminished, and the man becomes less master of himself and of his actions, although he never altogether loses either faith or liberty. Now these faculties are the instruments with which the soul has to do good works ; they are the wheels of the clock, that is, of a well-ordered life, and if these wheels and instruments are so disordered and damaged, what can be expected but disorder and trouble ? These are the chief causes of the difficulty, they all arise originally from sin, and increase more and more by sinful practices.

Can any man believe after this that conversion and change of

life will be easier hereafter, when he will have greatly multiplied his sins, and when at the same time all the causes of this difficulty will have increased? It is evident that the more thou hast sinned, the worse will thy habits be. Hereafter the devil will have more power over thee, and GOD will be much further away. And hereafter thy soul will be more degraded, with all the faculties and powers of which we have spoken. These are the causes of the difficulty; who then can imagine that the work will be easier when they have increased on every side?

For if thou continuest day by day in sin, it is evident that hereafter thou wilt have added more hard knots to those thou hast already tied; hereafter thou wilt have added new chains to those that bind thee now; hereafter thou wilt have greatly increased the load of sins that weighs thee down; hereafter the habit of sin will have darkened thy understanding, weakened thy will for good, strengthened thy desires for evil, and, as we said before, diminished and enfeebled thy power of choice against it. How then canst thou believe that this work will be easier hereafter? If thou sayest that thou canst not pass the ford now, when the river is but slightly swollen, wilt thou pass it better when it spreads from sea to sea? If it is so hard for thee now to root out the plants of vice which are but lately planted in thy soul, how much harder will it be hereafter, when they have struck root deeper? I mean, if now that thy vices are weaker thou sayest that thou canst not prevail against them, how wilt thou do it hereafter when they are rooted and strengthened? Now perchance thou fightest against a hundred sins, hereafter thou must fight against a thousand; now against the bad habits of a year or two, hereafter perhaps against those of ten years. Who has told thee then that hereafter thou wilt more easily carry the burthen that is now beyond thy strength, when its weight will be increased on every side? Dost thou not see that these are the pretexts of a bad paymaster, who puts off the payment from day to day, because he is unwilling to pay at all. Dost thou not see that these are lies of the old serpent, who deceived our first parents by a lie, (Gen. iii. 4, 5), and who seeks to deceive their children in the same way?

These things are most surely true; how is it possible then that

when difficulties have increased on every side, that which now appears impracticable will be easier? Who can believe that a multiplication of crimes will make forgiveness readier, or that an increase of sickness will make the cure easier? Hast thou not read in Ecclesiasticus, that a long sickness is troublesome to the physician, but that a short disease is sooner cured. (Eccles. x. 10., Vulg.) This delusion was very clearly explained by an Angel to one of the holy fathers of the desert, as we read in their lives. For he took him by the hand, led him out into the field, and showed him a man cutting wood, who made a great fagot and tried to carry it on his back; and when he could not, proceeded to cut more wood, and add it to the other; but finding himself still less able, as the load was heavier, he persisted in increasing it still more, thinking that so he would be better able to carry it. When the holy monk marvelled at this, the Angel told him that such was the folly of men, who being unable to rise up from their sins, because of the great burthen they had upon them, daily added sin to sin, and load to load, thinking that they would hereafter be able to bear a greater burthen, though now they could not support a lesser one.

What shall I say of the force of habit alone, and of its power to keep us in our sins? For as a man who is knocking in a nail drives it in deeper and deeper at every successive blow, so that the more blows he gives the tighter it is fixed, and the harder it is to get out; so by every evil deed that we do, as by a fresh stroke vice is driven deeper and deeper into our soul, till at last it is so firmly fixed that it is hardly possible to tear it out. And therefore we often see the old age of those who have passed their youth in vice stained with the dissoluteness of their past years, although their present age refuses it, and nature itself rejects it. For when nature is weary of the vice, habit still remains, and follows the same track, making them seek after impossible pleasures: so great is the force and tyranny of bad habits. And therefore it is said of the wicked man in the Book of Job, "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." (Job xx. 11.) Thus these vices have no end, but the common end of all things, namely death, the end to which they lead; though they themselves truly end

not even here, but continue in an endless eternity, wherefore it is said that "they" shall lie down with "him in the dust." And the cause of this is that by reason of old habits, now become a second nature, the vicious appetites have become as deeply rooted in the bones and marrow of their souls as a lingering consumption, which, when it has taken possession of a man, knows no cure or medicine.

This same thing our SAVIOUR showed us by the resurrection of Lazarus when he had been dead four days ; raising him with a loud voice and with much sorrow, (S. John xi. 39, 33, 43), though He had raised others with so much appearance of ease. (S. Luke vii. 14, 15, viii. 54, 55), to make us see how great a marvel it is when GOD raises one who has already been four days dead and stinking, that is, who has been many days and long time accustomed to sin. For, as S. Augustine declares, the first of these four days signifies delectation in sin ; the second, consent ; the third, the act ; the fourth, the habit of sinning ; and the man who has come to this is Lazarus, dead four days, and is not raised but by loud crying and tears of the SAVIOUR.

All this most evidently declares to us the great difficulty that is added to this work by procrastination, and how it becomes harder the longer it is delayed, and consequently how untrue are the words of those who say that amendment of life will be easier at a future day.

But suppose that all would turn out as thou dreamest, and that thy vain hopes were not to be disappointed, what wilt thou say of the time that thou art losing meantime, wherein thou mightest lay up such great and precious treasures ? What folly would it be, even according to a worldly judgment, when a wealthy city had just been stormed, and the soldiers were pilaging in great haste, loading themselves with jewels and treasures, if one neglected to do it because he was playing at quoits at his leisure with the boys in the street ? How much greater folly is it, that whilst the righteous are diligently doing good works to gain the treasures of heaven, thou, who mightest do the same, shouldst waste thy time and occupy thyself with the toys and baubles of the world ?

What sayest thou also not only of the good thou wilt lose, but



also of the evil that thou wilt do in the meantime? Is it not plain that a venial sin ought not to be committed, as S. Augustine says, for all the world? Why wilt thou then expose thyself in this interval to commit so many deadly ones, whereof thou oughtest not to commit one for the salvation of a thousand worlds? Why wilt thou in the meantime offend and provoke Him to wrath at Whose door thou must hereafter knock, at Whose feet thou must fall, on Whose hands thy everlasting lot must depend, and Whose mercy thou designest at last to ask with tears and groans? Why wilt thou obstinately persist in angering One of Whom thou wilt hereafter have need, and Who will be less propitious to thee then, in proportion as thou shalt have angered Him more. S. Bernard very justly rebukes such persons, saying, "Tell me, thou who makest such false reckonings, and perseverest in thy bad life, thinkest thou that the LORD will forgive thee or not? If thou thinkest He will not, can there be greater madness than to sin without hope of forgiveness? But if thou thinkest that He is so good and merciful that He will forgive thee after so many offences, tell me what can be baser than to make an occasion for offending Him worse of that which ought to make thee love Him more?" What answer hast thou to this?

What sayest thou too of the tears thou must shed hereafter for the sins that thou now committest? For if GOD hereafter calls and visits thee, and woe unto thee if He does not, be sure that every morsel thou now eatest will taste bitterer to thee than gall, that thou wilt weep continually for what thou hast once done, and wilt wish that thou had suffered a thousand deaths rather than have offended such a master. The time that David passed in sinful pleasure was very short, (2 Sam. xi. 4), but his sorrow for it was so long that he says of himself, "Every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi. 6.) And such was the abundance of these tears, that S. Jerome's translation, instead of "Wash I my bed," has, "Make I my bed to swim with my tears," to signify the great showers and streams of tears that proceeded from his eyes, because they had not kept the Law of GOD. Why then wilt thou spend thy time in such sowing, from which thou canst gather no fruit but tears?

Consider, moreover, that thou sowest not only tears for the future, but also difficulties for a good life, by the long habit of a bad one. For as a man who has had a long or severe disease seldom recovers from it so entirely that no vestiges remain for the future ; just so is it with great or long-accustomed sins. A man is always weaker and more incapable on the side on which he has sinned, and there the enemy mostly attacks him. The children of Israel worshipped a calf, and in punishment of that sin, Moses ground it to powder, and made them drink of it. (Exod. xxxii. 20.) For this is the punishment with which GOD chastises some sins, permitting in His just judgments that our very bones be as it were saturated with them, thus making our former idol our tormentor.

Besides all these things, consider how bad a division of time it is to appoint old age for repentance, and to waste all the years of our youth. What folly it would be for a man who had many beasts and many burthens for them to carry, to put all on the weakest beast, and leave the rest idle and unloaded ! Just such is the folly of those who leave the whole burthen of penitence to be borne by their old age, laying none on the stronger limbs of their youth and healthy years, which certainly are fitter to bear the weight than old age, which can hardly support itself. The great philosopher Seneca said well that the man who defers becoming virtuous till he is old, shows plainly that he means to give no time to virtue but that which is fit for nothing else. Then, together with this, consider the great satisfaction that GOD'S Infinite Majesty requires for perfect remission of offences against Him. It is so great, that, as S. John Climacus says, a man can hardly make satisfaction to-day for to-day's offences, and every day can hardly balance its own account. Why then wilt thou heap up debts all thy life, and leave the payment to old age, which can hardly pay its own share ? This is so heinous an offence, that S. Gregory counts it as grievous disloyalty, which he signifies by these words, "The man who delays his penitence till old age is very far from the allegiance that he owes to GOD. He has reason to fear, lest, through presuming indiscreetly on His mercy, he may fall into the hands of His justice."

But let us suppose that all this were not so, and that none of these things existed : if there be reason in the world, if there be honesty, or justice, will not the great benefits that thou hast received, and the great glory that is promised thee suffice to hinder thee from being so grudging in thy time of service to One Who has been so bountiful in the bestowal of gifts? Oh, with how much reason did the son of Sirach say, "Cease not to do good at all times, for the reward of GOD endureth for ever." (Ecclus. xviii. 22, Vulgate.) If the reward is to endure so long, why wouldst thou have the time of service so short? If the reward is to last as long as GOD reigns in heaven, why wilt thou not have the service last at any rate as long as thou livest on earth, which is but an instant ; why wilt thou seek to cut off two-thirds of that instant, and leave Him but a breath ?

Besides this, if thou hopest to be saved, thou must also presuppose that God has predestinated thee to this salvation from all eternity. Tell me then, if from His eternity the LORD loved thee, chose thee to be a Christian, adopted thee as His child, and made thee an inheritor of His Kingdom, wilt thou wait till the end of thy days to love Him, Who loved thee from the beginning of His eternity which has no beginning? Canst thou prevail on thyself to do such short service to One Who decreed to bestow on thee such long benefits? For with good reason, as the reward is eternal, so also should the service be, if it were possible. But since it cannot be so, but must be as short as the life of man, how canst thou take so large a portion of that short space from the service of such a master, and leave Him so little, and even that of the worst part? For as Seneca says, "What remains at the bottom of the vessel is not only little but bad." What a portion is this then that thou leavest for GOD? "Cursed be the deceiver," He saith by Malachi, "which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing : for I am a Great King, saith the LORD of Hosts, and My name is dreadful among the heathen." (Mal. i. 14.) As much as to say plainly, "To so great a LORD as I, great services are due, and it is an insult to so great a Majesty to offer Me the refuse of things. Dost thou

keep the best and fairest part of thy life for the devil's service, and intend to offer to GOD what the world rejects?" GOD saith, "Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But a perfect and just measure shalt thou have." (Deut. xxv. 14, 15.) And contrary to this law wilt thou have two such unequal measures, one so great for the devil, as the measure of a friend, and the other so small for GOD as if he were an enemy.

But above all I beseech thee, if thou art unmindful of all these benefits, to remember at least the inestimable benefit that the Eternal FATHER bestowed on thee when he gave thee His Only-begotten SON, giving as the price of thy soul that life which outvalues all the lives of men and angels. Wherefore if thou hadst in thyself all these lives and others innumerable, thou wouldst owe them all to the Giver of that life, and all together would be too small a payment. By what right then, with what face, by what claim, dost thou deny that one poor life that thou hast to Him Who gave such a life for thee? And wilt thou take away the best and choicest portion even of this, and leave the dregs for Him?

We will conclude this chapter as Solomon ends the Book of Ecclesiastes, by exhorting man to be mindful of his Creator in the days of his youth, and not to wait for the time of old age, which is incapable of any bodily labours, describing its afflictions and inabilities by rare and hidden images as follows, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened; nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house" (that is, the hands) "shall tremble, and the strong men" (the legs which bear up the whole weight of the edifice) "shall bow themselves, and the grinders" (the teeth which used to grind and divide the food) "cease because they are few, and they that look out of the windows" (the eyes) "be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets," (for the organs of the other senses shall fail too), "and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird," (for

sleep is light in old age), "and all the daughters of music shall be brought low," (because the vessels in which the voice is formed shrink and shrivel up), "also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way" (for the old man stumbles even on level ground), "and the almond tree shall flourish" (when the head is covered with grey hairs), "and the grasshopper shall be a burden" (for no strength remains to carry the lightest thing), "and desire shall fail" (because the strength of the heart, which is the seat of all our appetites, diminishes day by day), "because man goeth to his long home" (the grave), "and the mourners go about the streets. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto GOD Who gave it. (Eccles. xii. 1-5, 7.) Almost all of this is in the words of Solomon.

In accordance with this warning then, my Brother, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and defer not thy repentance to those heavily-laden years, when nature itself and the vigour of all the senses are failing, when man needs care and indulgences to repair the decaying strength of nature, instead of being fit to undertake the laborious work of repentance; when virtue appears a necessity rather than a choice; when the vices may boast over us that they leave us before we leave them; although more commonly our age is such as our youth has been, according to what the son of Sirach says, "If thou hast gathered nothing in thy youth, how canst thou find any thing in thine age?" (Ecclus. xxv. 3.)

This is the salutary counsel that Solomon gives us, and we find the same in Ecclesiasticus, in these words, "Who shall praise the Most High from the grave, instead of them which live and give thanks? Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead, as from one that is not; the living and sound in heart shall praise the LORD. How great is the loving-kindness of the LORD our GOD, and His compassion unto such as turn unto Him in holiness." (Ecclus. xvii. 27-29.) It is a great mystery that of all the sick folk who lay around the pool, whoever came first when the water was troubled met with the best success (S. John v.); hereby thou mayest perceive that our salvation depends en-

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tirely on our following the interior movements of GOD immediately and without delay. Run, therefore, my Brother, hasten, and if "to-day," as the Prophet says, ye "hear His voice," delay not the answer till to-morrow (Ps. xcvi.); but immediately begin a work which will be easier the sooner it is begun.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### *Against those who defer their Repentance till the Hour of Death.*

**W**HAT we have said ought to be enough to confound those who leave their repentance, as we have said, to the hour of death. For, if it is so dangerous to leave it to some future day, what must it be to leave it till that time? But because this delusion is extensively spread in the world, and many souls perish thereby, it is necessary that we should treat of it in particular. And though there is some danger in treating of this subject, because it might be an occasion of discouragement to some weak brethren; it is a greater danger that men should not know the danger to which they expose themselves by waiting for this time. For if we weigh both perils, the last is beyond comparison the greatest, for we see how many more souls are lost by indiscreet confidence, than by excessive fear. Therefore, we, who are set upon the watch-tower with Ezekiel, (Ezek. iii. 17-20; xxxiii. 2-7), must warn men of their danger, lest they whom we ought to warn should complain of being deceived, and lest, if they perish, their blood be required at our hand. And since we have no light and truth in this life but that of the Divine Scriptures, and of the holy fathers and doctors who explain them, let us see what they say on this subject, for I suppose that no man will be so presumptuous as to prefer his own opinion to theirs. And following this method, we will first bring forward what holy men of old say, and then what Holy Scripture teaches on this subject.

But before we begin this subject, let us first lay down as a

groundwork what S. Augustine and all the Doctors in general assert, namely, that as true repentance is the work of GOD, so He can inspire it when He pleases, and therefore, whenever repentance is sincere, even were it at the point of death, it is able to give salvation. But how seldom this occurs, I would not have you take either my word or your own judgment, but listen to the Saints, by whose mouths the HOLY GHOST spoke, and to whose words and testimony we should give credit. Hear first what S. Augustine says in his book on True and False Repentance, "Let no man delay his repentance till he can no longer sin, for this is a thing in which GOD requires of us freedom and not necessity, and therefore the man who lets his sins leave him before he leaves them, does not seem to leave them willingly, but by compulsion. Wherefore, those who would not turn to GOD when they were able, and come afterwards to confess when they can sin no longer, will not so easily obtain what they desire." And a little further on, explaining the nature of this conversion, he says, "That man is converted to GOD who thoroughly and wholly returns to Him, who does not merely fear punishment, but strives to obtain GOD'S favours and graces. And if any man should be thus converted at the end of his life, we are not to despair of his pardon. But because this perfect conversion is hardly, or very rarely, found at that time, there is reason to fear for one who is converted so late. For hardly can a man, wearied with the pains of sickness, and terrified with the fear of punishment, succeed in making true satisfaction, especially when he sees the children whom he loves inordinately, his wife, and the world, all dragging at him. And because there are many hindrances to repentance at this time, it is a very perilous thing, nay, almost certain perdition to delay that remedy till death.<sup>5</sup>

S. Ambrose also, in his book on Penitence, (though the words are attributed by some to S. Augustine), treats copiously on this subject, speaking thus, "As to the man who asks for the Sacrament of Penance and receives it at the very end of his life, I confess that we do not deny his request, but I dare not affirm that he departs from this world with good hope. I repeat once more that I dare not say it, I do not promise it, I do not say it,

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**I will not deceive you."** Wouldst thou be freed from this doubt, Brother? Wouldst thou escape this uncertainty? Repent whilst thou art in health. If thou doest this, I tell thee that thou hast made a good beginning, for thou repentest in a time when thou couldst still sin. But if thou delayest thy repentance till the time when thou canst not sin, it is plain that the sins leave thee, not thou the sins.

S. Isidore says the same in these words, "Let any man who desires to be assured of salvation at the hour of death repent whilst he is in health, and weep then for his misdeeds; but one who lives a bad life and then repents at the hour of death, incurs great peril, for his condemnation is uncertain indeed, but his salvation is doubtful."

These are fearful words, but far more so are those which Eusebius, the disciple of S. Jerome, writes that his holy master spake when he was expiring, prostrate on the floor, covered with sackcloth. But I dare not relate them with the rigour with which they are written, lest weak souls be dismayed, and therefore whosoever will may read them in the fourth volume of the works of S. Jerome, in a letter from Eusebius to the Bishop Damasus on the glorious death of that Saint. Here is a part of what he says, "Can the man who has persevered in sin all the days of his life say, I will repent and be converted, at the hour of death? Oh, how sad a comfort is this! For one who has lived a whole life of wickedness, without remembering, except perchance in dreams, that there is such a thing as penitence, will find it a very uncertain resource at that hour. Entangled in worldly business, worn out with the pains of sickness, afflicted with the remembrance of the children whom he must leave, and with the love of temporal things which he no longer hopes to enjoy; surrounded with all these distresses, how is he prepared to lift up his heart to GOD and truly to repent, which he never did in his life whilst he hoped to live, and which he would not do now if he looked for recovery? What is the repentance, then, that only accompanies the departure of life? I know some rich men, who, after dangerous sicknesses, have recovered their bodily health, whilst their souls became more diseased. This I hold, this I think, this I have

learned by long experience, that for a man to make a good end whose life has always been evil, who never feared to sin, and who always followed after vanity, is indeed a marvel." These are the words of Eusebius, and they show how greatly that holy Doctor feared concerning the deathbed repentance of one who had never repented in his life.

Nor does S. Gregory fear it less. On Job's words, "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when GOD taketh away his soul? Will GOD hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" (Job xxvii. 8, 9), he speaks thus, "GOD hears not in time of trouble the voice of one who, in time of peace, refused to hear his Master's voice. For it is written, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.' (Prov. xxviii. 9.) Holy Job then seeing how those who now refuse to do aright come at the end of their lives to ask mercies of GOD, says, Will GOD hear the cry of such men? And these words agree with those of our Redeemer, 'Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' (S. Matt. xxv. 11, 12.) For GOD'S severity in that time will be great in proportion as His mercy is greater now, and He Who now so graciously offers His mercy to sinners, will then chastise them with more rigorous justice." These are S. Gregory's words. Hugo of S. Victor also, in the second book of the Sacraments, in conformity with the opinions of these saints, says, "It is a hard thing for that repentance to be true which comes late, and the repentance which appears forced is very suspicious. For it is an easy thing for a man to believe that he does not desire what he cannot have, whereas the power shows plainly what the will is. Therefore, if thou dost not repent whilst thou hast the power, it is an argument that thou art not willing."

The Master of the Sentences follows the same path, and says, "As true repentance is the work of GOD, He can inspire it whenever He pleases, and in mercy reward those whom He might condemn in His justice. But because at that hour there are many things to distract a man from this work, it is a perilous thing and well-nigh mortal to delay the medicine of penitence

till then. It is a great thing when GOD inspires it at that hour, if indeed He does inspire any with it." What fearful words are these! Can any man be mad enough to expose the greatest of all treasures to the greatest of all dangers? Is there anything greater in the world than thy salvation? Who then can be so senseless as this to risk so precious a thing?

This is the opinion of all these great Doctors. What folly is it, then, to count the navigation of that gulf secure of which such skilful pilots speak with such apprehension. The art of dying well is one that we must be learning all our lives, for at the hour of death we have so much to do in dying, that there is hardly time to learn how to die well.

It remains now for the greater confirmation of this truth that we see what are the opinions of the Schoolmen on the subject. Scotus treats this subject expressly in his fourth Sentence, where he says, "The repentance which is begun at the hour of death is hardly true repentance, because of the great difficulties that attend it." He proves this proposition by four reasons.

The first is the great hindrance that the pains of sickness and the presence of death oppose to our lifting up our hearts to GOD and occupying them in real acts of penitence. To understand this, thou must know that all the passions of our heart have great power to lead away the senses and inclinations of men. And according to the rules of philosophy, the sorrowful passions have this power much more than the joyful ones. And therefore the passions and feelings of a dying man are the strongest of all; for, as Aristotle says, "the great crisis, the most terrible of all terrible things is death, wherein is so much pain of body, so much anguish of soul, so much grief for the children, the wife, and the world that are left behind." Among such violent storms of passions, where then will the thoughts and senses be but where these mighty pains and passions carry them?

We see by experience that when a man suffers from the sharp pain of any acute disease, though he be a good man, he is hardly able for the time to keep his thoughts fixed on GOD, but his attention goes where the pain calls it. If this is the case with a righteous man, how will it be with one who never knew what it was to think of GOD, and who, loving his body more than his

soul, cares less for the danger of his best than for that of his worst friend? S. Bernard names four impediments to contemplation, and he says that one of these is a bad state of body. For the soul is so occupied by the pains of the flesh, that it can hardly attend to any thought but that which is now troubling it. What madness is it then to delay attending to the greatest of all spiritual affairs till the worst of all bodily diseases comes upon us?

I have heard of a person who was about to die, and when they told him to prepare for the end, he was so distressed at seeing death so close to him, that he did nothing but beg with urgent entreaties for remedies and stimulants to escape it if possible, as if he could have compelled it to delay. And when a priest saw him so forgetful of what was fit for that hour, and admonished him to lay aside these cares and begin to call on GOD, he was offended at the good advice, and answered in words very unlike those that such a time demanded, and in the act of saying them, he died. And the person who spoke thus had been a good man. Judge by this how the presence of death will trouble those who love life, since it so troubled one who had formerly despised it.

I heard of another person who was dangerously ill, and believed his end to be at hand. He greatly desired, before his departure, to have an interval for earnest converse with GOD, and to prevent his Judge with some devout supplication; but his pain and the constant attacks of his malady, never seemed to give him an interval of relief to do it. If it is so difficult to do as much as this, who will be mad enough to leave the reformation of his whole life to that time?

S. Bernard's second reason is, that true repentance must be voluntary, that is, done with a ready will, and not of mere necessity. Wherefore, S. Augustine says, "We must not only fear the Judge, but also love Him, and what we do must be done of free will, not by constraint." But the man who never in his life repented truly, but waits till death to do so, does not seem to do it willingly, but by compulsion. And if he does it for no better reason, his repentance is not purely voluntary.

Such was Shimei's repentance for the offence which he had committed against David when he fled from Absalom his son. (2 Sam. xvi. 5-13.) When he saw him return victorious from his flight, and perceived the consequences that might result to himself, he came with a multitude of men to receive the king, and very humbly besought him to forgive his fault. And when Abishai, who was near of kin to David, saw it, he said, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" But the holy king, who well understood the worthlessness of Shimei's satisfaction, prudently deferred, yet left him not unpunished, (2 Sam. xix. 16-23), for at the hour of his death, not for the sake of revenge, but of justice, he left it as a dying charge to his son Solomon that he should repay him as he deserved; and he did so. (1 Kings ii. 8, 9, 36-46.) Such is the penitence of many bad Christians, who persevere in offending GOD all their life, but when the hour of account approaches, when they see death face to face, the grave open, the Judge present, when they perceive that there is no power or strength against that Supreme Power, and that their whole eternity is to be fixed in that instant, they address themselves to the Judge with great prayers and protestations, which avail them if they are true, but what they are the result commonly declares. For we have often seen people, as soon as they had escaped the danger, forget all their promises, and return to their former practices, even exacting again the debts which they had remitted, because they did not these things through virtue and the love of GOD, but only because of their present distress, and when that ceased, its effect ceased also.

This sort of repentance is very like that of sailors in a great tempest, who propose and promise great virtues and change of life. But as soon as the storm is ended and the immediate danger over, they game and blaspheme as they did before, and care no more for the past than if their intentions had been but a dream.

The third reason is, that the bad habit and custom of sin which the wicked man has had all his life, commonly cleaves to him, as the shadow cleaves to the body, till death; for habit is second nature, and is very hard to overcome. And thus we see many, even at that hour, as forgetful of their soul, as niggardly

towards it, even in death, as much inflamed with love of life, if they could redeem it at any price, as much in bondage to the love of this world, and of the things that they have loved in it, as if they were not in their present state. Hast thou not seen old men at that hour still grasping and covetous, eagerly looking after every insignificant trifle, with their hands as tightly closed against all good works, and their appetite as keen as ever even for those things which they cannot carry away with them? GOD often punishes sin in this way, allowing it to accompany its author even to the grave, as S. Gregory says in these words, "With this punishment GOD chastises the sinner, suffering him to be forgetful of himself in his death, who did not remember GOD in his life. Thus one forgetfulness is punished with another : that which was a sin with that which is at once a sin and a punishment." We see this practically every day, for we have heard of many who have died in the arms of lewd women, whom they sinfully loved, refusing to send them away, even in that hour, because by the just judgment of GOD they were forgetful of themselves and of their souls.

The fourth reason is founded on the little value that works done at that time usually have. For it is plain to those who have any knowledge of GOD how far less acceptable such services are to Him than those that are done at another time. For "is it much," as the holy Virgin Lucy said, "to be very liberal of that which thou must leave, however reluctantly?" What is it to forgive an affront, when it would be a greater disgrace not to forgive it? What is it to send away a mistress, when thou canst no longer keep her if thou wouldst?

From these reasons then, this Doctor concludes that it is difficult to repent truly at that hour, and he goes further, and says, that a Christian who deliberately resolves to delay his repentance till that hour, sins mortally, because of the great injury that he does to his soul, and the extreme risk to which he exposes his salvation. Can any thing be more terrible than this?

But because the whole decision of this question chiefly depends on GOD'S Word, against which there can be no appeal or reply, hear what it teaches us on this subject. In the first

chapter of Proverbs, after the words by which Eternal Wisdom calls men to repentance, Solomon proceeds immediately to tell us what that Wisdom will say to such as are rebellious to that call, as follows : " Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you ; then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD : they would none of My counsel." (Prov. i. 24-30.) These are the words of Solomon, or rather of GOD Himself. And S. Gregory understands and explains them in his Book of Morals, in the same way that we do here. What answer canst thou make to them ? Will not these menaces from GOD Himself make thee fear so great a danger, and prepare in time for this hour ?

Hear another and an equally plain testimony. Our LORD speaks in His Gospel of His coming to judgment (S. Matt. xvi. 27), and very earnestly counsels His disciples to be prepared against that hour ; using many similitudes to make them understand how needful it is. Thus He says, " Blessed are those servants, whom their LORD, when He cometh, shall find watching." (S. Luke xii. 37.) " But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My LORD delayeth His coming ; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken ; the LORD of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." (S. Matt. xxiv. 48-51.) Here we see plainly that the LORD well knew the counsels of the wicked, and the paths that they find out for their vices, and therefore He comes out to meet them, and tells them whither those paths lead, and what will be the end of their vain confidence. And is not this the very subject on which we are arguing ? What am I saying but the very things which the LORD Himself says ? Thou art the evil

servant who sayest this in thy heart, and who desirest to spend the time that He delays, in eating and drinking, and persevering in thy old sins. Dost thou not then fear this threat made by One Who can as easily fulfil as make it? He speaks to thee. Thou art the person, He says to thee, "Awake, miserable man; amend in time; lest thou perish in the day of judgment."

I seem to be spending a great deal of time on a very evident matter. But what can I do, when I see a great part of the world covering itself with this cloak? That thou mayest see the greatness of this danger more clearly still, hear another testimony of the same SAVIOUR. When He had ended these words, He proceeded immediately with what follows, saying, "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." "*Then,*" He says: *When?* When the Judge comes. When the hour of His judgment comes, both the general judgment of all, and the particular judgment of each individual, as S. Augustine says, for what is determined in one of these is not altered in the other. At that time then, saith our LORD, it shall be with you as it was with the ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five foolish, who waited for the bridegroom's coming. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And at midnight," the hour of the deepest sleep, that is, when men are most careless, and least think of this event, "there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut." But they that were not ready now began to provide themselves, and to prepare, and came afterwards, "saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." And thus the parable and its explanation are concluded in the holy Gospel, with the words, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." (S. Matt. xxv. 1-8, 10-13.) As much as to say, "Behold the happy result to the virgins who were ready, and the miserable end of those who were not." Therefore since ye know neither the day nor the hour of His coming, and since your salvation so greatly depends



on your preparation, watch and be ready at all times, lest that day find you unprepared like the foolish virgins, and so ye perish even as they perished. This is the literal meaning of the parable, as Cardinal Cajetan explains it, saying, "Let us learn this truth, that the repentance which is delayed till the hour of death, when the cry is made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, is unsafe; yea, this parable rather speaks of it as untrue, because for the most part it is so." And that Doctor ends by giving us the result of the whole parable thus, "The conclusion is, that the five foolish virgins were rejected, because they were not ready when the bridegroom came, whilst the other five were admitted, because they were ready. Therefore we must always be ready, because we know not the hour of His coming." Could any thing be expressed more plainly than this? I marvel greatly that after this truth has been so evidently proved, men should dare entertain and comfort themselves with so weak a hope. Before this bright light had been given, I should not wonder so much if they persuaded themselves of the contrary, or contrived to deceive themselves; but since that Teacher from Heaven has explained the subject to us; since the Judge Himself has declared to us by so many examples the laws of His Judgment, and the rule by which He will judge us, can any man believe that the affair will be decided in any other manner than He foretold Who is to give the sentence?

But perhaps in answer to all this thou wilt say, "Did not a single word at the hour of death save the thief? (S. Luke xxiii. 42, 43.) S. Augustine replies in the book already cited, that the confession of the penitent thief was at once the hour of his conversion, of his baptism, and of his death. Therefore as the man who dies immediately after baptism, as many have done, goes straight to heaven, even so was it with this happy thief, for that hour was to him the hour of his baptism.

Another answer is that this marvellous work, together with the other miracles and strange deeds then done, had been foretold and reserved against the coming into the world of the SON of GOD, and for a testimony of His glory; and therefore it was fit that at the hour in which our LORD suffered, the heavens should be darkened, the earth should quake, the graves should

be opened, and the dead arise, (S. Matt. xxvii. 45, 51, 52,) because all these marvels were kept to be a testimony to His glory; and one of these works was the salvation of that holy thief, a work wherein his confession is no less admirable than his salvation; for in the Cross he acknowledged the Kingdom, he preached the faith when the Apostles had lost it, he honoured the LORD when all the world blasphemed Him. Therefore, as this marvellous work, like the others, was reserved for that time, it is a great delusion to expect a thing to be done continually and at all times which was reserved for that alone. We know also, that under all governments in the world there are things that are ordinarily done, and there are extraordinary things; that the ordinary things are common to all, but the extraordinary are reserved for some particular persons. So is it under GOD'S government, that is, in His Church. For the regular and ordinary thing is what the Apostle says, "Whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. xi. 15.) Whereby we understand that generally speaking a good life is followed by a good death, and a bad life by a bad death. It is also an ordinary thing that those who do good works shall go into life eternal, and those who do evil into everlasting fire. (S. Matt. xxv. 46, 41.) All the Scriptures of GOD are continually repeating this to us. The Psalms sing it, the Prophets foretell it, the Apostles declare it, the Evangelists preach it. David summed it up in few words, when he said, "God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto GOD; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful, for Thou rewardest every man according to his work." (Ps. lxii. 11, 12.) This is the sum of all Christian philosophy. And accordingly we say that it is an ordinary thing that both the righteous and the wicked receive their reward at the end of life according to their works. But outside of this universal law, GOD may use especial grace to some for His glory, and grant the death of the righteous to one who has lived the life of a sinner, as also by some secret judgment of GOD one who has lived as a righteous man may die the death of a sinner, even as a man may sail prosperously throughout his whole voyage, and meet with a tempest at the entrance of the port. And therefore Solomon

said, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Eccles. iii. 21.) For though the universal rule is that the souls of those who live like beasts go down to hell, and that those who live according to reason like men, go upward to heaven, yet by some especial judgment of GOD this may be reversed, but still the safest and most general doctrine is this, a good life is followed by a good death. Therefore let no man encourage himself by examples of especial graces, for these are not a general rule, they do not belong to all, but to few, and those few are unknown, so that thou canst not tell if thou wilt be of the number.

Others look for another remedy, and say that the Sacraments of the Law of Grace give contrition to one who has attrition, that at the hour of death they will have this at least, and this together with the virtue of the Sacraments will suffice for their salvation. The answer to this is, that every kind of sorrow is not that sort of attrition, which, together with reception of the Sacrament, gives grace. For it is certain that there are many sorts of attrition and of sorrow, and that every kind does not suffice to make an attrite man contrite, but only that kind which is especially known to the Giver of Grace, and which none but He can know.

The holy Doctors were not ignorant of this theology, and yet they speak with great fear of this sort of repentance, as we said above, and S. Augustine, in the first passage that we quoted from him, expressly speaks of a person who receives penance, and is reconciled by the Sacraments of the Church, to whom, he says, we give penance, but not security.

If thou wouldst plead the penitence of the Ninevites, which proceeded from their fear of being destroyed in forty days, (Jonah iii. 4-10), consider not only the severe penance that they did, but also their change of life. Change thine in the same way, and the same mercy will not fail thee. But I see that thou no sooner recoverest from sickness, than thou returnest again to thine iniquities, and revokest all that thou hadst ordered. What wilt thou have me think of such repentance?

All this has been said not to shut the door of salvation or of

hope against any man, for the Saints shut it not, nor must any man do so, but to dislodge the wicked from that stronghold to which they resort to encourage themselves in their wickedness. Tell me then, now, my Brother, for the love of GOD, if the voices of all the Doctors, of all the Saints, of reason, and of Scripture itself, tell thee that this repentance is so perilous, how canst thou dare expose thy salvation to so great a risk? On what thinkest thou to rest in that last hour? On thy preparations, on thy legacies for pious uses and prayers? See how diligently the foolish virgins sought to provide themselves, how they cried to the bridegroom at the door, and how little it availed them, (S. Matt. xxv. 8-12), because their cries proceeded not from true penitence. Dost thou trust in the tears that thou wilt then shed? Tears indeed are very availing at all times, and happy is he who sheds them from his heart; but remember how many he shed, who "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and who, as the Apostle says, "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," (Heb. xii. 17), because he wept not for GOD, but for the interest that he had lost. Dost thou trust in the good intentions thou wilt then have? They are of great value when they are real, but remember those of King Antiochus, who, on his death-bed, promised such great things to GOD, that it is astonishing to read them, and yet the Scripture says, "This wicked person vowed also unto the LORD, Who now no more would have mercy on him." (2 Mac. ix. 13.) And the reason was, that all that he proposed, he proposed not with a spirit of love, but with mere servile fear, which, although a good thing, suffices not alone to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven. For fear of the pains of hell may proceed from a man's natural love of himself, and self-love is not a thing for which that Kingdom is given. And even as none might enter within the gate of King Ahasuerus clothed with sackcloth, (Esther iii. 2), so no man can enter into GOD'S house clothed in servile raiment, that is, with fear only, but all must have the wedding-garment, (S. Matt. xxii. 11-13), which is love.

Then, oh my Brother, I beseech thee now to think attentively that this hour will certainly come to thee, and not many days hence, for thou seest how fast the heavens move. Their rapid

circuits will soon have spun the whole of this hank of wool, our mortal life. "The day of their calamity is at hand," saith the Prophet, "and the things that shall come upon them make haste." (Deut. xxxii. 35.) When this short interval is passed, the fulfilment of these prophecies will come, and thou wilt see how true a prophet I have been in what I have told thee. Then wilt thou be surrounded with sufferings, worn with anxiety, in agony at the presence of death, awaiting the lot that will shortly fall to thee. Oh, doubtful fate! Oh, terrible crisis! Oh, trial wherein the sentence will be life eternal or everlasting death! Oh, couldst thou then change this lot! Oh, couldst thou have a share in that decision! Now thou canst; despise it not. Now thou hast time to gain the Judge. Now thou mayest obtain His favour. Follow the advice of the Prophet, who says, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." (Isa. lv. 6.) Now He is near to hear us, although we hear Him not; but in the hour of judgment we shall see Him, but He will not hear us unless we now obtain that hearing.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Against those who continue in their Sins in Hope of  
God's Mercy.*

THERE are others who continue in their wicked life, encouraging themselves with hope in GOD'S mercy, and in CHRIST'S sufferings. Their eyes, too, must be opened. Thou sayest that GOD'S mercy is great, since for sinners He hung upon the Cross. I confess that it is great indeed, since He endures so great a blasphemy as thine, in making His goodness an accomplice in thy wickedness ; in turning that Cross, which He appointed as the instrument for destroying the kingdom of sin, into an instrument for fortifying it ; and whereas thou oughtst to offer Him a thousand lives if thou hadst them, because He gave His for thee, making that very fact a reason for denying Him that one life which He gave thee. This was more grievous to the SAVIOUR than the death itself that He suffered : for He made no complaint of that ; but of this insult He complains by His prophet, saying, "The plowers plowed upon my back, and made long furrows." (Ps. cxxix. 3.) Tell me, I beseech thee, who taught thee to draw this consequence, that, because GOD is good, thou mayest be wicked, and escape unpunished? At any rate the HOLY GHOST does not teach us to reason thus, but in this way, "Because GOD is good He deserves to be served, obeyed, and loved above all things. Because GOD is good I ought to be so, and to hope in Him that He will forgive me, however great a sinner I have been, if I return to Him with my whole heart. Because GOD is good, and so good, it is the more wicked to offend against such good-

ness." For the more thou magnifiest the goodness in which thou puttest thy trust, the more dost thou enhance the crime that thou committest against it. It is not just that so great a crime should remain unpunished ; and the charge of punishing it belongs to GOD'S justice, which is not, as thou thinkest, an opponent, but a sister and a defender of GOD'S goodness, with which it consists not that such an offence should remain without its due punishment.

This is not a new sort of excuse, but very old and very usual in the world. This was the dispute between the true and the false prophets. The former, as ambassadors from GOD, threatened the people with the chastisements of His justice ; the others promised out of their own head false peace and mercy ; and when GOD'S heavy judgments had manifested the truth of the former, and the falsehood of the latter, the true prophets said, "Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The King of Babylon shall not come against you?" (Jer. xxxvii. 19.)

Thou sayest that GOD'S mercy is great. Thou who sayest this, believe me that GOD hath not opened thine eyes to see the greatness of His justice. For if He had, thou wouldst say with the Prophet, "Who regardeth the power of Thy wrath? For even thereafter as a man feareth, so is Thy displeasure." (Ps. xc. 11.)

That thou mayest be freed from this dangerous delusion, I beseech thee let us reason together. Neither thou nor I have seen Divine justice in itself, that thereby we might know its measure. Neither can we know GOD in this world but by His works. Let us then now enter into the spiritual world of the sacred Scriptures, and then come forth to this corporeal world in which we live, and let us observe in each the works of Divine justice, that thereby we may know it.

This will be a very profitable work, for besides the object that we seek, we shall obtain another very valuable fruit, namely, enlivening and nourishing in our hearts the fear of GOD, which the Saints call the treasure, the guard, and the ballast of our souls. For as a ship that carries no ballast or heavy weight is insecure, because any violent wind may overturn it, so also is the soul that is not ballasted with fear. Fear keeps it steady,

and suffers not the winds of human and divine favours to lift it up and overset it. However rich it may be, without this ballast it is in danger. And therefore, not only beginners, but also old servants in the house of the LORD must live in fear, and not only the guilty who have something to be afraid about, but also the righteous who have not done so much to make them afraid. The first must fear because they have fallen, and the others that they may not fall ; past evils should affright the former, dangers the latter.

And if thou desirest to know how this holy fear is to be produced in thee, I tell thee that after it has been infused by Grace, it is preserved and increased by the consideration of the works of Divine Justice, of which we will now treat. Think over it, meditate upon it many times, and by degrees this holy fear will grow up in thee.

The first act of GOD'S Justice that is mentioned in Holy Scripture, was the condemnation of the Angels. That terrible and bloodthirsty being, who is the chief of the devils, was once, as it is written in Job (Job xl. 19), "the chief of the ways of GOD." "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and justice," (Ps. xxv. 9), but till that first sin justice had not been displayed. It was hidden in the bosom of GOD as a sword in its sheath : even as that sword to which He sent the Prophet Ezekiel, that it might fulfil His desire. (Ezek. xxi. 9.) This first crime caused the sword to be unsheathed, and see what the first blow was. Lift up thine eyes, and thou wilt see a grievous thing, thou wilt see one of the richest jewels of the house of GOD, one of the greatest ornaments of heaven, an image wherein the Divine beauty shone forth so gloriously, "as lightning fall from heaven," for a single thought of pride. From the chief of the Angels he became the chief of devils, from most beautiful the most deformed, from most full of grace the greatest enemy that GOD has or will ever have. How amazing must this be to those heavenly spirits, who know also whence and whither so excellent a creature fell ! With what terror must they say those words of Isaiah, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning !" (Isa. xiv. 12.)

Let us now descend to the earthly paradise, where thou wilt

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see another fall no less terrible, but that it is reparable. (Gen. iii.) For if the Angels fell, each one of them had committed his actual sin which caused his fall. But what actual sin has the new-born child committed that he should be born a child of wrath? It is not necessary that he should actually have sinned, it is enough that he is born of the race of one who sinned, and who, by sinning, corrupted the common root of human nature which was in him : the child is born with his own sin. (Eph. ii. 3 ; Ps. li: 5.) So great is the glory and majesty of GOD, that the offence of a creature against Him deserves this terrible punishment. For if King Ahasuerus' great favourite, Haman, thought scorn to lay hands only on Mordecai, by whom he fancied himself insulted, but believed it due to his greatness that the whole race of Jews should pay with universal destruction for the disrespect of one, is it much that the infinite glory and greatness of GOD should require this punishment? Behold the first man, then, driven out of paradise for eating one morsel, for which the whole world is fasting to this day. And after so many centuries, the child that is born bears the scar of his father's wound ; and not only before he knows how to sin, but before he is born, he is a child of wrath, and this after all these many ages. And after all this length of time, the offence is not yet forgotten, though it has been divided amongst so many men, and punished with so many visitations. Nay, rather, all the pains that have ever been suffered, all the deaths that have been suffered to this day, and all the souls that are burning and will burn for ever in hell, are sparks that proceeded originally from that first fault, and are proofs and testimonies of GOD'S justice. And this even after the redemption of the human race by the Blood of CHRIST, for without that, what difference would there be between man and the devil, seeing that they would be equally deprived of means of salvation. Is this a sufficient specimen of GOD'S Justice?

And as if this heavy yoke laid upon the sons of Adam were not enough, more and more new punishments were successively added for more new sins, derived, as we have said, from that first sin. All the whole world perished in the waters of the flood. (Gen. vii. 23.) The LORD rained brimstone and fire out of

heaven on the five impure cities. (Gen. xix. 24.) Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up alive by the earth for their rivalry with Moses. (Num. xvi. 32.) Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for neglecting to observe a ceremony in their sacrifice, were devoured by fire from the sanctuary. The dignity of the priesthood availed them not, nor the holiness of their father, nor the favour of GOD towards their uncle Moses. (Lev. x. 1, 2.) In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira, for what seemed but a trifling lie, were both struck dead upon the spot. (Acts v. 1-10.)

What shall I say, moreover, of the dreadful judgments of GOD? Solomon, who was "wiser than all men," (1 Kings iv. 31), and so loved by GOD, that He caused his name to be called Jedidiah, the beloved of the LORD (2 Sam. xii. 25), by His mysterious judgments fell into the worst of all sins, namely, the worship of idols. (1 Kings xi. 4.) Can anything be more fearful? And if thou knewest the judgments of this sort that are daily executed in the Church, perhaps it would amaze thee no less than the things we have spoken of. Thou wouldst see many stars of heaven fallen to the earth, thou wouldst see many who once sat at the table of GOD and ate Angels' food, now desiring to fill their belly with the husks of swine; thou wouldst see many whose chastity had been purer and more beautiful than ancient ivory, now blackened and turned into coals of fire: and all these things occasioned by their own sins and faults, for GOD'S decrees and judgments lay no necessity on the works of men, nor do they destroy man's free will.

But far beyond all this, can there be a greater evidence of justice than this, that GOD would accept no less satisfaction than the death of His Only-begotten SON for the pardon of the world? What moving words are those which the SAVIOUR said to the women who bewailed Him, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

(S. Luke xxiii. 28-31.) As much as to say in plain words, "If this tree of life and innocence, wherein was never worm or rust of sin, so burns in the flames of Divine justice for the sins of others, what will be the fate of the barren and dry tree, which, not through charity, but through wickedness, is so loaded with its own?" If, then, in this most merciful act thou seest such rigorous justice, how will it be in GOD'S other acts which do not so brightly show forth His mercy.

But if perchance thou art so dull as not to understand the force of this reasoning, look on the eternity of the pains of hell, and see how terrible that justice is which punishes with everlasting torments a sin that may be committed in an instant. This terrible justice that thou seest is compatible with the great mercy that thou praisest. How dreadful a thing it is to consider how that Supreme GOD will look from the throne of His glory upon a soul that has been suffering for millions of years in such fearful torments, and that He will never take compassion on it, but will rather rejoice that it suffers, and that its sufferings are without end, without limit, and without hope of relief. Oh, mysteries of GOD'S justice! Oh, subject of extremest marvel! Oh, secret and abyss of profoundest depth! Who can be so devoid of reason, that he will not tremble and marvel when he considers so great a punishment?

But let us now leave Holy Scripture and come to this visible world, and we shall find in it other effects of most great and dreadful justice. I tell thee of a truth that they who have even a little light and knowledge of GOD, live in this world in such fear and dread of these things, that though they can conceive in some manner of all GOD'S other works, this is altogether beyond their comprehension, and they have no resource but a simple and humble confession of faith. Who does not marvel to see almost all the face of the earth covered with unbelief; to see how large a seedbed the devils have here for peopling hell; to see that so large a part of the world, even after the redemption of the human race, continues as before in darkness and in error? What is the whole territory of Christendom but a mere corner if we compare it with that of heathenism, and with the new lands that are daily discovered? And all the rest remains under the tyranny

of the kingdom of darkness, where the Sun of Righteousness shines not, where the light of truth has not dawned, where, as on the mountains of Gilboa, (2 Sam. 1-21), there is no dew or rain from heaven, whence, from the beginning of the world, the devils have daily carried so much booty of souls to everlasting fires, for as it is plain that outside of Noah's ark no one escaped at the time of the flood, (Gen. vii. 23 ; 1 Peter iii. 20), nor outside of Rahab's house was any inhabitant of Jericho delivered, (Josh. vi. 21, 25), so no man is saved outside of GOD'S house, which is His Church.

And this little spot of Christendom that exists, look at its condition in our days, and thou wilt find assuredly that in all this mystical body, from the sole of the feet unto the crown, there is scarce any sound part. (Job ii. 7 ; Isa. i. 6.) Leave out some of the chief cities, wherein there is some trace of the true faith, and go through all the other multitude of villages and towns where it is entirely forgotten. Thou wilt find many places of which the words might well be spoken which GOD once spoke of Jerusalem, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth ; and I will pardon it." (Jer. v. 1.) Go, I say, not through all the taverns and thoroughfares, for they are places given to lies and deceits, but through all the dwelling-houses, hearken and hear like Jeremiah, (Jer. viii. 6), and seldom wilt thou find that they speak aright. Here are murmurings, there lewdness ; in one place oaths, in another blasphemy, strifes, covetings, threats ; everywhere the heart and the tongue occupied with the earth and its gains, in very few places with GOD and the things of GOD, except to swear and forswear themselves by His Name, a remembrance whereof He Himself complains by His Prophet, saying that they "make mention of the GOD of Israel, and swear falsely by My Name." (Isa. xlvi. 1 ; Zech. v. 4.) So that, as far as outward signs go, thou couldst hardly tell whether they were Christian or heathen towns, except, perhaps, by the bell-towers that are seen from afar, or the oaths and perjuries that are heard nigh at hand, for there is hardly anything else to know them by. How can such people be numbered among

those of whom Isaiah says, "All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed." (Isa. lxi. 9.) If the life of a Christian is to be such that all who see him shall judge him to be a child of GOD, where shall we number those who seem rather mockers and despisers of CHRIST than Christians?

Since then the sins and evils of the world are so many, how is it that thou dost not plainly see in them the tokens and effects of GOD's justice? For it cannot be denied that as one of GOD's greatest benefits is to keep a man from sin, so to let him fall into it is one of His greatest punishments and the surest tokens of His wrath. Thus we read in the Second Book of Samuel that the "anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel," (2 Sam. xxiv. 1), and therefore he suffered David to fall into the sin of pride, when he ordered the people to be numbered. We read also in Ecclesiasticus, that "all such things shall be far from the godly, and they shall not wallow in their sins." (Ecclus. xxiii. 14.) For as part of the reward of virtue is the increase of that virtue, so the punishment of sin often is the permission of other sins. Thus we see that the greatest punishment that was inflicted for the greatest of all sins, the death of the SON of GOD, was that which the Prophet denounces against the authors of that iniquity, "Let them fall from one wickedness to another, and not come into Thy righteousness." And what follows? The same Prophet goes on to tell us, "Let them be wiped out of the book of the living, and not be written among the righteous." (Ps. lxix. 28, 29).

Now if GOD's punishing sin by sin be so great a punishment and so great a proof of anger, how is it that in the seething multitude of sins in the world, thou seest not the evidences of His justice? As one engulfed in the sea beholds nothing but sky and water, whithersoever he turns his eyes, so thou beholdest scarce anything but sins; and seeing sins, seest thou not justice? In the midst of the ocean seest thou not water? And if this whole world is an ocean of sins, what is it but an ocean of justice? I need not go down to hell to see the bright manifestation of GOD's justice; I can see it plainly enough in this world.

But if thou art blind to all things without thee, look at any rate into thyself; for if thou art in sin, thou art fallen under the blow of this justice, and the more secure and confident thou art, the deeper is thy fall. This was once the case with S. Augustine, as he himself confesses, saying, "I was drowning in the gulf of my sins; Thine anger had prevailed against me, and I knew it not; the chains of my mortality deafened me with their clank, and this ignorance of Thy wrath and of my guilt was the punishment of my pride." If then GOD has punished thee in this manner, permitting thee to continue so long blind and drowned in thine iniquities, why dost thou tell of the fair things so contrary to what thou findest in it? Let him who receives favours tell of GOD'S mercies, but he who is under punishment of His judgments. It is compatible with GOD'S mercy to leave thee so long in sin; will it be inconsistent with it to send thee to hell? Oh, that thou knewest how short the distance is from sin to punishment, and from grace to glory! When a man has been brought into grace, is it much to give him glory? When he has fallen into sin, is it much to give him punishment? Grace is the beginning and the title to glory; sin is hell deserved and begun.

Besides this, what can be more terrible than that, while the pains of hell are so horrible, as we said before, GOD allows the number of those who are condemned to be so great, and that of those who are saved so small? And how small the number is, lest thou shouldst think that this is guesswork, He shall say, Who "telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names." (Ps. cxlvii. 4.) Who will not fear at those well-known but little regarded words, which the LORD spoke to the disciples when they asked, "LORD, are there few that be saved?" (S. Luke xiii. 23.) "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." (S. Matt. vii. 13, 14.) Oh, that we felt as the SAVIOUR felt when He not simply said, but repeated so earnestly, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way!" All the world perished in the waters of the flood, and eight souls

only were saved in Noah's ark, which S. Peter tells us, in his general Epistle, is a figure of the fewness of the saved in comparison with those who are lost. (1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.)

GOD brought six hundred thousand men out of Egypt to give them the promised land, besides women and children who are not counted. (Exod. xii. 37.) He helped them with innumerable favours from Heaven, and yet that land which God had offered them by His grace, they lost by their own fault (1 Cor. x. 1-10); for out of all that number of men two only entered it. (Num. xiv. 30.) And all the Doctors commonly say that this is a figure of the many who are lost and the few who are saved; teaching us that "many be called, but few chosen." (S. Matt. xx. 16.) Not without cause then does the Holy Scripture often speak of the righteous as precious stones, (Mal. iii. 17; Zech. ix. 16), giving us to understand how rare they are in the world; as much as common stones are more numerous than jewels, so much does the number of the wicked surpass that of the righteous, as Solomon testified when he said that fools cannot be numbered. (Eccles. i. 15, Vulg.) Tell me now, if the elect are so few in number and so accurately known, as both the type and the fact declare, (for thou seest how many by the just judgment of GOD lost that whereto they were called) dost thou not fear in this general peril, in this universal deluge? If the parts were equal there would be great reason to fear. But why do I speak of equal parts? I tell thee truly that hell for ever is so terrible an evil, that if there were but one man in the whole human race to go there, this alone ought to make all the rest tremble. When our LORD, at supper with His disciples, said that one of them should betray Him, they all began to fear though their consciences told them they were innocent, (S. John xiv. 21, 22; S. Mark xiv. 18, 19;) for when an evil is great, though it touches but a few, every man fears for his own share of the risk. If a host of men were in a field, and they all knew by revelation from GOD that a thunderbolt would fall and kill one of them, they knew not which, each would undoubtedly fear the danger for himself. How would it be if half or the greater part of them were in peril? How far greater would their fear be? Tell me now, thou that art so wise about all the things in this world, and altogether brutish about

what concerns thy salvation. GOD now reveals to thee that so many will be smitten by that thunderbolt of Divine justice, and that so few will escape it, and thou knowest not to which portion thou belongest, and yet dost thou not fear? Is hell a lesser evil than a thunderbolt? Has GOD given thee an assurance? Hast thou a sealed letter of salvation? As yet thou hast no security, thy deeds condemn thee, and by GOD'S justice, unless thou turnest over another leaf, thou art reprobate; and yet dost thou not fear?

Thou sayest that GOD'S mercy encourages thee. This does not undo what I have said, for if it is compatible with it that so many shall be lost, is it not also compatible that thou shalt be one of them, if thou livest as they do? Dost thou not see, wretched man, that self-love deceives thee, making thee think that thou wilt be dealt with unlike all the world besides? What privilege hast thou above all the children of Adam, that thou shouldst not go where they go whose works thou copieest?

And if we are to know GOD by His works as was said above, I can tell thee one thing, that although many comparisons may be made between those of His mercy and of His justice, and the former are in every way the greatest, yet after all we find that in the race of Adam from whom thou art descended, there are more "vessels of wrath" than "vessels of mercy," (Rom. ix. 22, 23) for the lost are many and the saved few. And this is not because GOD'S help and favour are ever wanting to any, for, as the Apostle says, He "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" (1 Tim. ii. 4) but it is through the fault of the wicked who do not choose to profit by GOD'S favours.

I have said all this to make thee understand that if it is compatible with that great mercy of GOD whereof thou speakest, that there should be so many unbelievers in the world, and so many bad Christians in the Church, and that if all the unbelievers and so many of the Christians are lost, it will be compatible, thou shalt be lost too, if thou art like them. Did the heavens smile on thee when thou wast born, or were the decrees of GOD and the laws of His gospel changed, that there should be one world for thee, and another for other people? If it is



consistent with this great mercy that "hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure," (Isa. v. 14), and that multitudes of souls descend daily into it, will it be inconsistent that thine should descend there too, if thou livest the same life? And lest thou shouldst say that then GOD was severe, but now He is gentle, take notice that His gentleness is perfectly compatible with what I have just told thee; cease not therefore to fear His punishments although thou art a Christian, if thou art wicked.

Will GOD lose His glory forsooth, if thou alone failest to enter into it? Hast thou some great abilities of which GOD has especial need, that He should bear with thee, with all thy peculiarities good or bad? Or hast thou some privilege above other men, that thou shouldst not perish with them, if thou art wicked as they are? Though David's sons had the privilege of their father's merits, yet GOD gave them what they deserved when they were wicked, and thus many of them came to disastrous ends, (2 Sam. xiii. 28, 29, xviii., 14; 1 Kings ii. 24, 25); and art thou filled with vain confidence, and thinkest thyself secure? Thou errest, my Brother, thou errest if thou thinkest that this is hoping in GOD. This is not hope, but presumption. It is hope to believe that if thou repentest and turnest from thy sins, GOD will forgive thee, however wicked thou hast been; but it is presumption to believe that thou mayest persevere in thy bad life, and yet be sure of salvation. And do not think that this is an ordinary sin, for it is counted among the sins against the HOLY GHOST, because it is an insult and a misuse of GOD'S Goodness, which is an especial attribute of the HOLY GHOST; and the SAVIOUR says that these sins shall not be forgiven, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come," (S. Matt. xii. 32), signifying that they are very hard to be forgiven, because as far as in them lies, they shut the door of grace, and offend the very Physician Who would give us life.

Let us conclude this matter with the instructions that the HOLY GHOST gives us in Ecclesiasticus, "Concerning pardoned sin, be not without fear; and say not, His mercy is great; He will be pacified for the multitude of my sins; for mercy and wrath come from Him, and His indignation resteth upon

sinner." (Ecclus. v. 5, 6, Vulg.) Pray tell me, if He commands us to fear concerning pardoned sins, how is it that thou fearest not, in adding every day sin to sin? And note well these words, "His indignation resteth upon sinners;" for on them depends the understanding of this matter. For thou must know that although GOD'S mercy extends to the righteous and to sinners, and to each He gives His portion, preserving the former and waiting for the others, yet the great favours that GOD promises in His Scriptures belong especially to the righteous; for as they faithfully keep GOD'S laws, so He faithfully keeps His word to them, and is truly their Father, as they are His obedient children. And on the contrary, all that thou readest of threatenings, curses, and rigorous justice, is addressed to thee, and to such as thou. What blindness then is thine, that thou art not afraid of the threats that are addressed to thee, and takest such great delight in the words that do not concern thee? Take thine own part, and leave the righteous what is his. For thee is anger; fear. For the righteous is love and good will; let him rejoice. Wouldst thou see this? Consider David's words, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. The countenance of the LORD is against them that do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth." (Ps. xxxiv. 25, 26.) And in the Book of Ezra thou wilt find these words written, "The hand of our GOD is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him." (Ezra viii. 22.)

Now if this be so, thou wretched man, who continuest in thy sins, how art thou deceived? How dost thou cross thy hands? How dost thou exchange the letters? This superscription is not for thee. The sweetness of GOD'S love and approbation does not belong to thee in this state of wrath and enmity. This is Jacob's portion; it belongs not to Esau. This is the lot of the good; what hast thou who art wicked to do with it; be wicked no longer, and it will be thine. Be wicked no longer, and GOD'S good will and Fatherly providence will be for thee. But now thou art a robber, an usurper of other men's goods, and seekest to enter into forbidden things. "Put thou thy trust in the

LORD," saith David, "and be doing good." (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) And in another place he saith, "Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD." (Ps. iv. 5.) This is the right sort of confidence, not trifling with GOD'S mercy, continuing in thy sins, and thinking to go to Heaven. Thou hast true hope if thou forsakest thy sins, and callest on GOD; but if thou obstinately perseverest in them, it is not hope, but presumption. This is not to hope, and by hoping to obtain mercy: it is to offend against mercy, and make thyself unworthy of it. For as the Church avails nothing to a man who goes out of it to do evil, neither does GOD'S mercy profit one who shelters himself under it in his wickedness.

This should be considered by the stewards of GOD'S Word, for often by not considering to whom they speak, they give occasion to the wicked to continue in their wickedness. They ought to consider that as the more food you give to a sickly body, the more you hurt it; so the more a soul that is obstinate in sin is fed with this sort of confidence, the more encouragement it finds to persevere in its evil life.

Finally, I conclude this subject with a wise saying of S. Augustine, who says, that by hope and by despair men go to hell; hoping wrongly in life, and despairing worse in death. Therefore, my Brother, lay aside this presumptuous confidence, and remember that in GOD are mercy and justice, so that as thou fixest thine eyes on His mercy and hopest, thou must also fix them on His justice and fear. For, as S. Bernard very well says, GOD has two feet, one of mercy, and the other of justice, and no man must embrace either singly, lest justice without mercy should make us fear so much that we despair, or mercy without justice should make us presume and hope so much that we continue in our evil courses.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Against those who excuse themselves by saying that the Way of  
Virtue is hard and difficult.*

WORLDLY men make another excuse for forsaking virtue ; they say that it is hard and difficult, although they know very well that this difficulty does not proceed from virtue itself, which is a reasonable thing, and therefore very conformable to the nature of a rational creature, but from the bad inclination of our flesh and appetites, which originated in sin. Wherefore the Apostle says, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. v. 17.) And in another place he says, "I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." (Rom. vii. 22, 23.) By which words he gives us to understand that virtue and the law of GOD are conformable and pleasing to the superior part of our soul, wherein are the understanding and the will, but that the keeping of it is hindered by the bad inclination and corruption of our appetite with all its passions, which rebelled against the superior part of our soul when that rebelled against GOD, which rebellion is the cause of all this difficulty. This is the reason why so many turn away from virtue though they esteem it highly : like some sick persons who desire health, but abhor medicine, because its taste is unpleasant. If we could free men then from this delusion we should have done a good day's work, for this is the chief thing that repels them from virtue, because there is nothing else in it that is not of great value and dignity.

Thou must know then that the chief cause of this delusion is that men fix their eyes only on the difficulty that there is in virtue, and not on the help that GOD offers us to overcome it, which is the same sort of delusion under which Elisha's servant laboured, as we said above, when seeing the Syrian host compassing his master's house, and not seeing that which GOD had sent for his defence, he was dismayed and thought himself lost, till on the prayer of the holy Prophet GOD opened his eyes, and he saw how much greater a force there was with him than against him. (2 Kings vi. 15-17.) Such is the delusion of the men we are speaking of: experiencing in themselves the difficulty of virtue, and not having experienced the help and assistance that are given them to obtain it, they think it a very hard thing to undertake, and therefore give it up.

Pray tell me now, if the way of virtue is so hard, what did the Prophet mean by saying, "I have had as great delight in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all manner of riches." (Ps. cxix. 14.) And in another place, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Ps. xix. 10.) Here he allows not only what we all allow to virtue, that is, its marvellous excellence and preciousness, but also what the world denies it, its sweetness and pleasantness. Wherefore thou mayest be sure that those who make this heavy charge, although they are Christians, and live under the law of grace, have not even tasted of this mystery. Thou miserable creature, who callest thyself a Christian, tell me why did CHRIST come into the world? Why did He shed His Blood? Why did He institute the Sacraments? Why did He send the HOLY GHOST? What is the meaning of gospel? What means grace? What JESUS? What means the glorious Name of the very LORD Whom thou worshippes? If thou knowest not, ask the Evangelist, and he will tell thee. "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." (S. Matt. i. 21.) And what is it to be a Saviour and a Deliverer from sin, but to deserve for us pardon for our past sins, and to obtain for us grace to avoid sins to come? Why did the SAVIOUR come into the world then but to help thee to obtain salvation? Why did He die upon the cross, but

to slay sin? Why did He rise again after death, but to raise thee to this new kind of life? Why did He shed His Blood, but to make of it a medicine to heal thy wounds? Why did He ordain the Sacraments, but for a remedy and help against sin? Is not one of the very chief fruits of His passion and of His coming, the smoothing for us the way to heaven, which before was hard and difficult. This Isaiah signified, when he said that at MESSIAH'S coming the crooked should be made straight, and the rough places plain. (Isa. xl. 4.) And lastly, why, besides all these things, did He send the HOLY GHOST, but that of flesh He might make thee spirit, and why did He send Him in the likeness of fire, (Acts ii. 3, 4), but that like fire He might kindle, enlighten, quicken thee, transform thee into Himself, and lift thee up to that place whence He came? What is the use of grace and all the infused virtues that proceed from it, but to make CHRIST'S yoke easy, and the practice of virtue light; to enable us to sing in tribulation, to hope in danger, to overcome in temptation? The beginning, the middle, and the end of the gospel is this; that as a sinful and earthly man, namely, Adam, made us sinful and earthly, so a Heavenly and Righteous MAN, namely, CHRIST, makes us heavenly and righteous. (1 Cor. xv. 47-49.) What else do the Evangelists write? What other promises did the Prophets announce? What else did the Apostles preach? This is the sum of all Christian theology. This is the short work that GOD made on the earth. This is "the consummation and abbreviation which Isaiah the Prophet says that he heard of GOD, (Isa. x. 23); after which there followed immediately in the world such abundance of virtues and righteousness.

Let us explain this more particularly. I ask thee whence proceeds the difficulty that there is in virtue? Thou wilt say, From the evil inclinations of our heart, from our flesh conceived in sin, "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other." (Gal. v. 17; Rom. vii. 22, 23.) Suppose now that GOD said to thee, "Come hither, Man, I will take away thy evil heart, and give thee a new heart, and I will give thee strength to mortify thy bad inclinations and desires." If GOD promised

thee this, would the way of virtue still be hard to thee? Certainly not. But tell me, has not the LORD promised and confirmed this to thee again and again throughout the Scriptures? Hear what He says by Ezekiel the Prophet, speaking especially to those who live under the law of grace, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you ; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them : and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. xi. 19, 20.) These are the words of Ezekiel. What dost thou doubt now? That GOD will keep His word? Or that, when He has kept it, thou wilt be able to keep His law? If thou sayest the first, thou makest God a false promiser, which is one of the greatest blasphemies possible. If thou sayest that with His help thou wilt not be able to keep His law, thou makest Him an inefficient provider, One Who desires to restore man, but uses insufficient means. What hast thou then to doubt about?

Besides this, He will also give thee strength to mortify the bad inclinations that fight against thee, and make the way hard. This is one of the chief fruits of that tree of life, which the SAVIOUR sanctified with His Blood. This the Apostle confesses, saying, "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. vi. 6.) By "our old man," and "the body of sin," the Apostle means our sensitive appetite, with all the evil inclinations that proceed from it ; and he says that it was crucified on the cross with CHRIST, because by that most glorious sacrifice He obtained for us grace and strength to overcome that tyrant, and so to be freed from the power of our bad inclinations and from the bondage of sin, as was declared above. This is the victory, this is the great assistance that GOD promises by Isaiah, speaking thus, "Fear thou not ; for I am with thee ; be not dismayed ; for I am thy GOD : I will strengthen thee : yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteous one ;" that is, of the SON of GOD Himself. "Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee ; they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a

thing of nought. For I the LORD thy GOD will hold thee by thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not ; I will help thee." (Isa. xli. 10, 12, 13.) These are the words of GOD by Isaiah. Who can be discouraged with such assistance? Who will be dismayed by fear of his bad inclinations, since grace so overcomes them?

And if thou sayest that the righteous still have their private failings, the "wrinkles," which, as Job says, are "a witness" against them, (Job xvi. 8) ; the Prophet answers by one word, saying, "They shall be as nothing," (Isa. xli. 2). For if they remain, they remain as an exercise, and not as a stumbling-block ; to arouse us, and not to rule over us ; to enable us to gain a crown, and not to ensnare us into sin. They remain for our victory, and not for our fall ; they remain in such a manner as it is good that they should remain, that we may be approved, that we may be humbled, that we may know our own weakness, and that GOD and His grace may be glorified, and therefore their remaining will turn to our advantage. For as wild beasts, which are naturally hurtful to men, are useful to them when tamed and domesticated, so the passions, when tempered and moderated, aid greatly in the practice of virtue.

Tell me then, if GOD so strengthens thee, who will overcome thee? "If GOD be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31.) "The LORD is my light, and my salvation," says David, "whom then shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life ; of whom then shall I be afraid?" "Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid : and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him." (Ps. xxvii. 1, 3.) Assuredly, my Brother, if with such promises as these thou darest not resolve to serve GOD, thou must be very cowardly ; and if thou dost not trust such words, without doubt thou art very disloyal. It is GOD Who tells thee that He will give thee a new spirit, that He will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh, (Ezek. xi. 19) ; that He will mortify thy passions, that thou wilt be so changed, that thou wilt not know thyself, because He will weaken and enfeeble them. What more hast thou to ask? What more hast thou to desire? What dost thou lack, but

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lively faith and lively hope, to make thee put thy trust in GOD, and cast thyself into His arms? (Ps. xxxvii. 3.)

It seems to me that thou canst make no answer to this, except by saying that thy sins are great, and that this grace will perhaps be denied thee on that account. My answer is, that this is one of the greatest insults that thou canst offer to GOD; for it implies that there are needs which He cannot or will not remedy, when His creature turns to Him, and asks His help. I do not ask thee to believe me. But believe the Prophet, who seems to have thought of thee, and determined to forestall thee, when he wrote these words, "When all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, . . . and thou shalt call them to mind, . . . and shalt return unto the LORD thy GOD, . . . with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; . . . then the LORD thy GOD will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee. . . . If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy GOD gather thee. . . . And the LORD thy GOD will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it." (Deut. xxx. 1-5.) And he adds still further, "The LORD thy GOD will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." (Deut. xxx. 6.) Oh, that the LORD would also circumcise thine eyes, and take away their darkness, that thou mightst clearly see what this circumcision is. Thou canst not be so dull as to understand it after a corporal manner; no heart is capable of this. What circumcision then is it that the LORD promises? That undoubtedly of the superfluity of our passions, and of the evil inclinations that arise in our heart, which are a great hindrance to His love. All these barren and hurtful branches He promises to circumcise with the knife of His grace, (S. John xv. 2); that the heart being thus, as it were, pruned and circumcised, may employ all its powers in that one branch, the love of GOD. Then wilt thou be an Israelite "indeed," (S. John i. 47); then will the LORD have circumcised thee, when He has pruned away from thy soul the love of the world, and love of Him alone remains.

I would have thee also note attentively that what the LORD

here promises that He will do if thou turnest to Him, He commands thee in another place to do thyself, saying, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart." (Jer. iv. 4.) How is this, O LORD? The very thing that Thou promisest, dost Thou command me to do? If Thou wilt do it, why command me? If I am to do it, why promise it me? This difficulty is solved by S. Augustine's words, "LORD, grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." It is He, then, Who commands me what to do, and Who gives me grace to do it: the command and the promise are one: GOD and man do the same thing, GOD as the chief cause, man as the inferior cause. Thus He deals with man as a painter with his pupil, when he guides the pencil in his hand, and so makes a perfect picture; the picture certainly is made by both, but the honour and the efficacy of the two are not equal. So does GOD deal with us, but without prejudice to the freedom of our will, that when the work is done, the man may have nothing to glory in, but may give glory to GOD with the Prophet, saying, "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isa. xxvi. 12.)

Remember these words, and make them a commentary on all GOD'S commandments; for whatever He commands thee to do, He promises to be with thee in doing it. When He commands thee to circumcise thy heart, He says that He will circumcise it; so when He commands thee to love Him above all things, He will give thee grace to do so. And this is why GOD'S yoke is said to be easy, (S. Matt. xi. 30), because two bear it, namely, GOD and man, so that what was hard to nature alone, GOD'S grace makes light. And therefore, after the words we have quoted, Moses immediately goes on to say, "This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deut. xxx. 11-14.) By these words the holy Prophet sought to dissipate all the clouds and difficulties that carnal

men find in GOD'S law. For, as they look on the law without the gospel, that is, on what they are commanded to do, without the grace that will be given them to do it with, they bring this accusation against GOD'S law, and call it hard and wearisome, without reflecting that this is an express contradiction to the words of S. John the Evangelist, who says, "This is the love of GOD, that we keep His commandments : and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world." (1 John v. 3, 4.) He means that they who have received into their souls the Spirit of GOD, whereby they were born again and made children of Him Whose Spirit they received, these, having GOD dwelling in them by His grace, are able to do more than all that is not GOD ; and therefore neither the world, nor the devil, nor all the powers of hell can prevail against them. And hence it follows that even if the burthen of GOD'S commandments were very heavy, the new strength that is communicated by grace would make it light.

How will it be if to all this we add the help that we receive from charity ? For undoubtedly it is one of the chief effects of charity to make the yoke of GOD'S law very easy. For, as S. Augustine says, "the labours of those who love are not painful, but rather give pleasure, as we see in fishers, hunters, and shooters." What makes a mother insensible to the continual toil of bringing up her child but love ? What makes a good wife attend upon her sick husband day and night but love ? What makes the very beasts and birds so solicitous in providing for their young, hungering that they may eat, toiling that they may rest, daring to defend them so passionately, but love ? What made S Paul the Apostle write those courageous words in the Epistle to the Romans, "Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD." (Rqm. viii. 35, 38, 39.) What was it that made the blessed Dominic thirst after martyrdom "as the hart desireth the

water-brooks" (Ps. xlii. 1), but the power of love? What made S. Laurence so joyful whilst he was broiling on the grid-iron that he even said that the burning coals refreshed him, but his great thirst for martyrdom, which had been kindled by the flame of this love? For true love of GOD, as Chrysologus says, accounts nothing hard, nothing bitter, nothing wearisome. What sword, what wounds, what pains, what death can overcome perfect love? Love is an impenetrable coat of mail; it turns arrows, repels darts, despises danger, mocks at death; in short, if it is love, it overcomes everything.

But perfect love is not content with victory over all the troubles that it encounters, it desires to encounter more for Him Whom it loves. Hence arises the great thirst of perfect men after martyrdom, that is, after shedding their blood for Him Who first shed His Blood for them. And when this desire is not fulfilled, they turn against themselves, and become their own executioners. And therefore they afflict their bodies, and make them suffer hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and many other mortifications, and this gives them a little relief, because their desire is in some degree fulfilled.

The lovers of this world understand not this language, nor can they comprehend how it is possible to love what they so abhor, and to abhor what they so greatly love; but it is true. We read in Holy Scripture that the Egyptians had beasts for their gods, and worshipped them. But the children of Israel, on the contrary, called them "an abomination," and slew and sacrificed to GOD'S honour what the others worshipped. (Exod. viii. 26, 27.) In like manner the righteous, as true Israelites, call the gods of this world an abomination; such are honour, pleasure, wealth, which the world worships, and to which it offers sacrifice; they despise these false gods and slay them as abominations, in honour of the true GOD. Therefore if any man desires to offer an acceptable service to GOD, let him look what the world worships, and sacrifice that; and, on the contrary, let him embrace for love of Him what he sees that it abhors. Did not they do this, who, having received the first fruits of the HOLY GHOST, "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer

shame" for the Name of CHRIST? (Acts v. 41.) If love was able to make prisons, scourging, the gridiron, and the fire sweet, will it not be able to make the keeping of GOD'S commands sweet to thee? And if it is able every day to make the righteous endure not only the burthen of the law, but also the additional load of fasting, vigils, disciplines, hair-shirts, nakedness, and poverty, will it not be able to make thee carry the bare burthen of the Law of GOD and of His Church? Oh, how deluded thou art. How ignorant of virtue, and of the power of charity, and of GOD'S grace.

What I have here said is enough to do away with this general objection that so many make. But if things were otherwise, if there were hardships in this way, pray tell me would it be much that thou shouldst do for the salvation of thy soul some part of what thou dost for the health of thy body? Would it be much to do something to escape everlasting torments? What would the rich man who is now in hell do, thinkest thou, if he might be permitted to return to this world and to amend his past errors? Thou oughtest now to do no less, for if thou art wicked, the same torment is reserved for thee.

And if besides this thou considerest attentively how much GOD has done for thee, and how much more He promises thee, and the many sins that thou hast committed against Him, and how many afflictions the saints have suffered, and far more all that the Most Holy of all holy ones suffered, thou wouldst undoubtedly be ashamed not to suffer something for GOD, thou wouldst even be afraid and jealous of every morsel that was savoury to thy palate. Therefore S. Bernard said that the sufferings and tribulations of this world are not equal either to the glory that we hope for, to the pain that we dread, to the sins that we have committed, or to the benefits that we have received from GOD. Any one of these considerations shall be more than sufficient to make us undertake this life, were it ever so painful.

But to say the truth, although there are troubles on every side and in every sort of life, the troubles in the path of wicked men are incomparably greater than those in the path of the

righteous. For although there must be trouble in a journey, however thou goest, because walking wearies us, yet the blind man who incessantly stumbles on his way, must suffer more fatigue than one who has eyes and who sees where he goes. As this life then is a journey, we cannot avoid toil till we come to the place of rest. But a wicked man who is led by passion instead of by reason, most surely walks in darkness, for nothing in the world is blinder than passion. But good men, being guided by reason, see the precipices and ravines, and turn aside from them, as Solomon the wisest of men declared, when he said, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." (Prov. iv. 18, 19.) And it is not only dark, as Solomon here says, but also "slippery," as David declares. (Ps. xxxv. 6.) Consider how often a man must fall who walks in such a path, and that in the dark and without eyes; and understand the difference between the two paths, and the two sorts of trouble.

And even for this portion of trouble which remains to the righteous, there are a thousand helps to lessen and relieve them, as we have said. For they are helped by the presence and fatherly Providence of GOD which guides them, by the grace of the HOLY GHOST which inspires them, by the virtue of the Sacraments which sanctifies them, by the Divine consolations which gladden them, by the examples of good men which encourage them, by the writings of the saints which teach them, by the joy of a good conscience which comforts them, by the hope of glory which animates them, and by a thousand other favours and succours from GOD, which make this way so pleasant to them, that after a time they say with the Prophet, "O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth." (Ps. cxix. 103.)

Whoever considers all these things will see the agreement of many passages in the Scriptures, some of which call it a hard, and some an easy way. For in one place the Prophet says, "Because of the words of Thy lips I have kept hard ways." (Ps. xvii. 4, Vulg.) And in another, "I have had as great delight in the way of Thy commandments, as in all manner of

riches." (Ps. cxix. 14.) For this path has both these properties, hardness and easiness, one on the side of nature, the other by the power of grace, so that what was difficult for one reason, becomes easy for another. The LORD signified this when He said that His yoke was easy and His burden light. By "yoke" He signified its weight, by "easy" how grace would facilitate our bearing it.

And if perchance thou wou'dst ask, how is it possible that it can be a yoke, and yet light, whereas it is the nature of a yoke to be heavy? I answer, that GOD lightens it as He promised by Hosea the Prophet, saying, "I was to them as they that lift up the yoke upon their jaws." (Hosea xi. 4, marg.) Is it any wonder that a yoke is light when GOD lifts it up, and Himself helps to bear it? If the bush burned with fire, and was not consumed, (Exod. iii. 3), because GOD was in it, is it surprising that this should be a burden and yet light, when GOD Himself is in it, and helps to bear it up? Wouldst thou see both these things in one person? Hear what S. Paul says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.) Here is the burden of afflictions, and here also is the alleviation and sweetness with which GOD endues them.

But Isaiah the Prophet signified this yet more plainly, when he said, "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." (Isa. xli. 31.) See thou here the yoke cancelled by the power of grace, carnal strength changed into spiritual strength, or to say more truly, human strength transformed into Divine? Observe that the holy Prophet passed over neither the labour nor the rest, but showed how greatly one surpasses the other, when he said, "They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Therefore, my Brother, thou hast no reason to turn aside from this path as hard and rough, seeing that there are so many things that make it smooth.

And if all these reasons do not complete thy conviction, if thy unbelief is like that of S. Thomas, who would believe nothing

but what he saw with his eyes, (S. John xx. 25), I will meet thee on this ground too, for I fear no test when I defend so good a cause. Let us then take a man who has passed through all these things, who was once vicious and worldly, but afterwards, by GOD's great mercy, is transformed and becomes another man. Such a man will be a good judge in this case, for he has not only heard, but also seen, and proved both these states by experience, and has tasted of both cups. Entreat this man and ask him to tell thee which he has found the sweetest. Those whose office in the Church is to examine other men's consciences could give good evidence on this subject, for these are "they that go down to the sea in ships, and see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep," (Ps. cvii. 23, 24), that is the works of His grace, and the great and blessed changes that are wrought by it daily. For truly there is nothing in the world more astonishing nor anything whose marvellousness grows more every day on one who well considers it than the effects which this divine grace works in the soul of a righteous man. How does it transform it, lift it up, strengthen it, comfort it, regulate it both outwardly and inwardly, make it give up all the habits of the old man, change all its affections and delights, make it love what it formerly abhorred and abhor what it once loved, make it take pleasure in what was distasteful to it and loathe what it delighted in. What strength it gives him to fight, what joy, what peace, what light to know GOD's will, the vanity of the world, and the value of spiritual things which it once despised. But more amazing than all these things is the shortness of the time in which all these things are done; for it is not necessary to study long in the schools of the philosophers, and to wait till the time of gray hairs, that age may help us to gather wisdom and mortify our passions; but amid the fires of youth, and in a very few days' space, a man is so changed that he hardly seems the same. Wherefore, S. Cyprian says very truly, that this is a thing that is sooner felt than learnt, and that it is not gained by many years of study, but by the short way of grace, which gives it all in very little time. We might almost say that grace is a kind of spiritual charm, whereby GOD so changes men's hearts, that He makes them love with surpassing



love the thing they used to abhor, the practice of virtue; and abhor with the utmost abhorrence what they used to love, namely, the pleasures and delights of sin.

This is a great advantage that Confessors gain by their office if they exercise it with the right spirit of devotion, for they daily see many of these wonders, by which our LORD well pays them for their labours in His service; for we have seen many of them changed by the sight of these changes, and greatly helped on in the path of virtue by these daily examples. Like Jacob, they observe in silence the mysterious sayings of Joseph, and value at its proper worth what the simple youth who tells it knows not how to estimate. (Gen. xxxvii. 11.)

But for greater light and confirmation of what I have said, I will here add the example and authority of two great Saints, who were at one time under this delusion, and afterwards had their eyes opened, both of whom GOD has caused to leave their experience in writing for our example and instruction. The blessed Martyr S. Cyprian, writing to a friend of his, named Donatus, of the beginning and manner of his conversion, speaks thus :

“At the time when I was lost and engulfed in the world, knowing nothing of my own life, having no light or knowledge of the truth, I thought that impossible which GOD’S grace promised for my salvation and my care, namely, that a man could be born again, (S. John iii. 3), and receive another spirit, and another sort of life, whereby he should cease to be what he was before, and should have a new being, a new and contrary life, so that while the substance and appearance of the body remained the same, the man would be entirely changed. I said that such a change was impossible, because it was impossible to shake off what was so deeply rooted in us, both by corrupt nature and depraved habits. For how can he possibly be abstinent who is accustomed to an abundant and delicate table? How can he consent to wear a shabby cloak whose delight is to glitter in gold and scarlet? How can he bear to see himself without office and without honours whose delight has been authority and place? How can he endure to go alone and unaccompanied

who prides himself on having a train of followers and filling the street with servants wherever he goes? It cannot be but that former habits and vices will come each to put in its claim, and to tempt and disquiet the heart with their flatteries. It is impossible but that gluttony will often solicit him, pride puff him up, honour delight him, anger inflame him, cruelty excite him, and lust overcome him.

“In this way I often reasoned with myself. For, being in bondage to so many kinds of vice, from which I thought I could not deliver myself, I encouraged those vices by despair of amendment, regarding them as domestic servants born in my house. But after the sins of my past life had been washed away, the light from above entered into my heart, now purified and cleansed by the water of holy Baptism; after I had received the SPIRIT from Heaven, the second birth made me a new man, then in a marvellous manner, doubtful things began to become plain, obscure things clear, shut things to open, those which I had thought difficult easy, and those which seemed impossible possible, so that it became very evident that that which was born of the flesh, and lived according to flesh, was of man, and that which was animated by the HOLY SPIRIT was of GOD. (S. John iii. 6.) Thou knowest well, friend Donatus, what that Heavenly SPIRIT took from me, and what it gave me, for He is the death of sin and the life of virtue. Thou knowest all this, for here I speak not my own praise, but that of GOD. There must be no boasting in such a case, although it is not boasting but gratitude to speak of that which is not attributed to man’s virtue, but to GOD’S grace, for it is plain that ceasing to sin proceeded from His grace, even as the previous sins proceeded from corrupt nature.”

These are the words of S. Cyprian, and they plainly show thee the delusion which thou sharest with many others, who measure the difficulty of virtue with their own strength, and think it hard and even impossible to attain to it, not remembering that if they throw themselves into GOD’S arms, and resolve to leave their sins, He will receive them into His grace, which will make the path as smooth for thee as thou hast seen it in this example; for

what has been said here is most surely true, and the grace which failed not this Saint, will not fail thee, if thou turnest to GOD as he did.

Hear another example, no less remarkable. S. Augustine writes in the Eighth Book of his Confessions, that when he began to propose in his heart to leave the world, he found great difficulty in the change. On one hand his former pleasures came before him, and said, "Dost thou cast us off, and from that moment shall we be no more with thee for ever?" On the other side, he says that virtue appeared to him with a serene and cheerful countenance, accompanied by multitudes of good examples, maidens, widows, a multitude of every age and station, living chastely, and said, "Canst thou not what these can, or can they either in themselves, and not in the LORD their GOD? Because thou standest in thyself, thou standest not. Cast thyself upon Him, fear not, He will not withdraw Himself that thou shouldst fall, cast thyself fearlessly upon Him, He will receive, and will heal thee."

In the midst of this vehement conflict, the Saint says that he began to weep abundantly, and that he went away by himself, and cast himself down under a fig-tree, giving full vent to his tears, and began to cry out in his inmost heart, and to say, "And Thou, O LORD, how long?" (Ps. vi. 3, Vulg.) "How long, LORD, wilt thou be angry for ever? O remember not our old sins." (Ps. lxxix. 5, 8.) "How long shall I say, To-morrow, to-morrow? Why not now, why is there not in this hour an end to my uncleanness?"

After these things, and others which the Saint relates, he says that GOD so changed his heart, that he never again had any desire for carnal vices or worldly things, but felt his heart entirely free from all its former appetites. And therefore, being released from these chains, he begins in the next Book to give thanks to his Deliverer, saying, "O LORD, I am Thy servant: I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid, Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder, I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of praise. (Ps. cxvi. 14, 15.) All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee? (Ps. xxxv. 10.) Where was CHRIST JESUS my LORD? Where had my free-will been so many years that it

turned not to Thee? Out of what low and deep abyss didst Thou call it in a moment, that I might submit my neck to Thy easy yoke, and to the light burthen of Thy holy law? How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetnesses of the world; and what I feared to be parted from, was now a joy to part with. For thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou True and Highest Sweetness. Thou castedst them forth, and for them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure, more beauteous than all other beauty." These are the words of S. Augustine.

Tell me now, if this is the case, if the power and efficacy of GOD's grace are so great, what keeps thee in bondage and hinders thee from doing the same? If thou believest that this is true, that grace has power to make such a change, and that it will be denied to none who ask it, for GOD is the same that He then was, and there is no respect of persons with Him, what hinders thee from leaving this miserable bondage and embracing the Highest Good which is offered thee freely? Why wilt thou by one hell gain another hell, rather than by one paradise another paradise? Be not cowardly or distrustful. Make but one trial, and trust in GOD. Before thou hast begun, He will come out with open arms to receive thee, like the prodigal son. (S. Luke xv. 20.) It is a marvellous thing, that if an impostor promised to teach thee some secret of alchemy, whereby thou mightst turn copper into gold, thou wouldst not fail to try, though the experiment might be costly; and here GOD tells thee the way to change thyself from earthly to heavenly, from flesh to spirit, from man to an angel, and thou wilt not try!

Finally, thou wilt have to know this truth sooner or later, either in this world or in the next. I beg thee to consider attentively how confounded thou wilt be in the day of account, when thou findest thyself condemned for having left the path of virtue because thou thoughtst it rough and difficult, and now seest clearly that it was far pleasanter than that of vice, and was the only way to everlasting joys.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Against those who are afraid to follow the Path of Virtue,  
through Love of the World.*

**I**F we could feel the pulse of all who dread the path of virtue, we should perhaps find that one of the things that most dismay them is the deceitful love of this world. I call it deceitful, because it is caused by a false show and appearance of good that worldly things have, which makes ignorant men esteem them highly. For as timorous beasts start away from things because they fancy them dangerous when they are not, so these, on the contrary, love and follow worldly things, believing them to be delightful, which they are not. And therefore, as those who seek to cure such animals of this fault, try to lead them up to the very place where they refuse to go, that they may see that what they feared was but a shadow, so must we now lead these men to those earthly shadows which they so inordinately love, and make them look upon them with other eyes, that they may see plainly that all they love is but a shadow and vanity, and that such things are no more worthy to be loved than those dangers to be feared.

When I look attentively on the world and all its joys, I find in it six different evils, which no one can deny; namely, shortness, misery, danger, blindness, sin, and delusion. They all accompany these joys, and plainly show what they are. We will speak shortly of each in its turn.

To begin with their shortness. Thou canst not deny that all the joys and pleasures of the world of whatever kind, are short. For man's happiness cannot be longer than his life. How long

this life is, we have said elsewhere, for the longest life of man hardly reaches a hundred years. And how many attain to this? I have seen people who were Bishops two months, Supreme Pontiffs one month, or married but a week; we read of many such cases in times past, and see many daily. But let us suppose that thy life will be very long. "Let us give a hundred years," says S. Chrysostom, "to worldly pastimes, add to these another hundred, and again two hundred more; what is all this in comparison with eternity?" "If a man live many years," saith Solomon, "and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity." (Eccles. xi. 8.) For in the presence of eternity, all past joys, however great, appear what they are, vanity. Even the wicked confess this in the Book of Wisdom when they say that as soon as they were born, they began to draw to their end. (Wisd. v. 15.) How short will all the time of this life then seem to the wicked; it will be as if they had lived but a day, and had been immediately translated from the womb to the grave. All the pleasures and satisfactions of this world will seem to them as dreams, unreal semblances of pleasure. Isaiah the Prophet signifies this in these words, "It shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion." (Isa. xxix. 8.) Their prosperity shall be so short, that when they have opened their eyes, and that moment of time has passed, they will see that all their joys were as a dream.

And tell me, what more than this was the glory of all the potentates and emperors in the world? "Where," saith the Prophet, "are the princes of the heathen become, and such as ruled the beasts upon the earth; they that had their pastime with the fowls of the air, and they that hoarded up silver and gold, wherein men trust, and make no end of their getting? For they that wrought in silver, and were so careful, and whose works are unsearchable, they are vanished and gone down to the grave, and others are come up in their steads." (Baruch.) What

has become of the wise man? Where is the learned? Where is he that sought out the secrets of nature? What has become of the glory of Solomon? Where is the mighty Alexander, and the boastful Ahasuerus? Where are the renowned Cæsars of Rome? Where are the other princes and kings of the earth? What has their vainglory availed them, or their worldly power, their many servants, their false riches, their hosts of armies, the number of their jesters, the multitude of liars and flatterers that surrounded them? All this was but a shadow, a dream, a joy that passed in a moment. See, my Brother, how short the joys of this world are.

Besides its shortness, there is another evil connected with this joy, that it is accompanied with a thousand miseries which cannot be avoided in this life, I would rather say in this valley of tears, in this place of banishment, in this restless sea. For in truth man's miseries are more than the days or even the hours of his life; each day dawns with its own anxiety, and each hour threatens its own misery. And what tongue is able to express all these miseries? Who can number all the diseases of our bodies, all the sufferings of our souls, all the injuries of our neighbours, and all the disasters of our lives? One goes to law with us for our property, another seeks our life, a third blemishes our honour; some with hatred, some with envy, some with deceit, some with revenge, some with false witness, some with weapons, some with their tongues worse than any weapons, wage deadly war against us. And besides all these, there are innumerable miseries which I cannot name, because they are unexpected occurrences. One man has his eye thrust out, another his arm broken; one falls from a window, another from his horse, a third is drowned in a river; one is ruined by heavy contributions, another by being security. But if thou wouldst know more of this, ask a worldly man to number to thee his hours of pleasure and his hours of sadness; for if the two were weighed in a balance, thou wouldst plainly see how much one outweighs the other, and perceive that for one hour of pleasure there are a hundred of sadness. Now if life is so short, as we said before, and so much of it is occupied by all these troubles, pray tell me how much remains for pure and true happiness?

But these miseries of which I have spoken are common to the good and to the wicked, who sail on the same sea, and are liable to the same tempests. There are other miseries far more poignant, which belong only to the wicked, because they proceed from their wickedness; and the knowledge of these is more to our purpose, because the life of the wicked is made more hateful by being subject to such wretchedness. How many and how great those are, the wicked themselves confess in the Book of Wisdom, saying, "We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction; yea, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way: but as for the way of the LORD, we have not known it." (Wisd. v. 7.) As good men have a paradise in this life, and hope for another, and go from Sabbath to Sabbath, that is, from joy to joy, so the wicked have a hell in this life, and expect another, for they go from the hell of a bad conscience to the hell of punishment.

These troubles come upon the wicked in many ways. Some come from GOD, Who is too just a judge to suffer sin to pass unpunished; and though He generally keeps the punishment for the next life, it frequently begins in this. For as surely as GOD'S universal providence watches over the whole world, so does His particular providence over each individual. When there are most sins in the world, there are also most punishments, famines, wars, pestilence, heresies, and other calamities. So also according to a man's sins, punishments are sent upon him. Wherefore GOD said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin," that is, the punishment of sin, "lieth at the door." (Gen. iv. 7.) And in Deuteronomy Moses said to the people of Israel, "Know therefore that the LORD thy GOD, He is GOD, the faithful GOD, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to him that hateth Him, He will repay him to his face." (Deut. vii. 9, 10.) See how He repeats, "He will repay him to his face." Here we see that besides the punishments that are kept for the next life, they are also often punished in this, for the Scripture repeats, "He will not be slack,

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He will repay him." This is the cause of many calamities and scourges which they suffer : they live in an unceasing whirl of anxiety, fatigue, want, and trouble. They feel these things, but know not whence they come, and suppose them to be conditions of nature, rather than punishments of their faults. For as they do not acknowledge natural good things as benefits from GOD, and give Him no thanks for them, neither do they recognise the visitations of His wrath as chastisements, nor are they amended by them.

Other troubles come upon them from GOD'S vicegerents, the ministers of His justice, who often lay hands upon malefactors, vexing and molesting them with imprisonment, banishment, fines, prosecutions, dishonour, forfeiture, and a thousand other punishments which embitter the sweetness of their fault, and make them pay sevenfold even in this life.

Other afflictions and miseries come upon them through the disorderly affections and passions of their heart. For what can be expected from excessive affliction, from vain fear, from uncertain hope, from inordinate desire, and from corroding sadness, but a swarm of cares and terrors, which destroy the peace and liberty of the heart, whereof we spoke before, which make their life uneasy, which tempt to sin, hinder prayer, destroy their sleep by night, and make the days of their life sad and miserable? All these various miseries have their source in the man himself, that is, in the irregularity of his passions. What can he expect from without who has such a harvest of his own, and with whom can he be at peace who is so hotly at war with himself?

If there were nothing more than bodily pains and afflictions in the world; there would not be so much cause for fear ; but there are not only afflictions for the body, but also dangers for the soul, which are much more to be apprehended, because they touch us more to the quick. So numerous are they that the Prophet said, "Upon the ungodly He shall rain snares." (Ps. xi. 7.) How many snares dost thou think he saw in the world who compared them to the drops of water that fall from heaven? And he says especially, "Upon the ungodly," for as they keep so little watch over their heart and senses, are so little careful

to flee from occasions of sin, use so little diligence in providing themselves with spiritual remedies, and moreover walk in the midst of the flames of this world; do they not walk amongst innumerable dangers? And because of this multitude of dangers, he says that GOD will "rain snares upon the ungodly." Snares in youth, and snares in age; snares in wealth, and snares in poverty; snares in honour, and snares in dishonour; snares in society, and snares in solitude; snares in adversity, and snares in prosperity; snares, in short, for every sense of man, for his eyes, for his ears, for his tongue, for everything. So many, indeed, are these snares, that the Prophet cries out and says, "The snare shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab." (Jer. xlviii. 43.) If GOD would open our eyes for awhile, as He did those of S. Anthony, we should see the whole world full of snares interlaced together, and exclaim as he did, "Who shall escape from so many snares?" This is the destruction of so many souls as perish every day: for, as S. Bernard laments, in the sea of Marseilles out of ten ships hardly one is lost; but in the sea of this world out of ten souls hardly one is saved. Who will not fear so dangerous a world? Who will not seek to flee from such snares? Who will not tremble to walk barefoot amongst so many serpents, unarmed among so many enemies, unprepared among so many occasions of sin, without medicine among so many risks of mortal diseases? Who will not strive to come out of this Egypt? (Exod. xii. 51.) Who will not flee out of the midst of this Babylon? (Jer. li. 6.) Who will not seek to escape from the flames of Sodom and Gomorrah, and take refuge in the mountain of a good life? (Gen. xix. 17.) For in a world so full of snares and precipices, and burning with so many fires of sin, who can account himself safe? "Can a man take fire in his bosom," saith the Wise Man, "and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" (Prov. vi. 27, 28.) "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled therewith; and he that hath fellowship with a proud man shall be like unto him." (Ecclus. xiii. 1.)

To this multitude of snares and dangers is added another evil which makes them greater, the blindness and darkness of worldly men, excellently figured by that Egyptian darkness

which was so thick that it might be felt ; so that "they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days." (Exod. x. 21-23.) Such and far more palpable is the darkness under which this world suffers. Consider its denseness and its follies, and tell me, can there be greater blindness for men to believe what they believe and to live as they live? Can there be greater blindness than to think so much of men and so little of GOD, to regard the laws of the world so much and those of GOD so little? to labour so much for this body, which is but an animal, and so little for the soul which is the likeness of the Divine Majesty? to heap up treasures for this life which ends to-morrow, and to lay up nothing for the next which will last for ever? to wear oneself out in seeking worldly interest, and not to take one step for the treasures of heaven? What greater blindness than, knowing so certainly that we are to die, and that then our lot will be fixed for ever, we should live as carelessly as if we had to live eternally? For what do sinners who are to die to-morrow leave undone which they would do if they had to live for ever? What greater blindness than to lose the inheritance of heaven for the indulgence of an appetite? to keep such strict account of their property, and so little of their conscience? to insist on having everything that belongs to them good, and not care to make their own lives so? Thou wilt find so much of this blindness in the world that thou wilt think men are enchanted and bewitched, so that having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not, more sharp-sighted than lynxes to things of earth, they are blinder than moles to those of heaven, as befell S. Paul in a figure when he was going to persecute the Church, for after he had fallen to the earth, "when his eyes were opened, he saw no man." (Acts ix. 8.) So is it with these unhappy men, whose eyes are so wide open to the things of the world, and so closely shut to those of GOD.

Now since there are so many snares and so much darkness in the world, what is to be expected but falls and sins? This is the greatest of all the evils in the world; this is the thing that should most move us to abhor it. S. Cyprian tries to lead one of his friends to despise the world by this consideration

alone. He supposes himself to take him up to a very high mountain from which the whole world is visible, and from thence to point out to him all seas and all lands, all market-places and all tribunals, full of a thousand sorts of injustice and sins ; that seeing so many and so great evils in the world, he may understand how much it ought to be abhorred, and how much he owes to GOD, for bringing him out of it. Come up now, my Brother, to this same mountain, turn thine eyes awhile on the market-places, the palaces, the courts of law, and the counting-houses of the world, thou wilt see so many sorts of sin, so many lies, so many slanders, so many frauds, so many perjuries, so many robberies, so much envy, so much flattery, so much vanity, and above all, so much forgetfulness of GOD, and so much indifference to men's own salvation, that thou canst not but wonder and be amazed at so much evil. Thou wilt see the greater part of mankind living like brute beasts, following the impulse of their passions, taking no more account of justice or of reason than as if they were so many pagans, without any knowledge of GOD, or thought that they have aught to do but to live and die. Thou wilt see the innocent oppressed, the guilty pardoned, the good despised, the wicked honoured and exalted. Thou wilt see the poor and humble trodden down, and favour in all things prevailing against virtue. Thou wilt see justice sold, truth despised, shame lost, the arts degraded, office prostituted, all classes for the most part corrupted. Thou wilt see many perverse men worthy of severe punishment, who have become very rich by robbery, deceit, and other bad ways, praised and dreaded by all. Thou wilt see these, and others who have hardly more than the outward appearance of men, raised to great honours and dignities. Thou wilt see money loved and worshipped in the world more than GOD, and very many laws, Divine and human, corrupted by it, so that in many places nothing remains of justice but the name. And when thou hast seen these things thou wilt understand with how much reason the Prophet said, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after GOD. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become

abominable ; there is none that doeth good, no not one." (Ps. xiv. 3, 4.) No less does He complain by Hosea the Prophet, saying, "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of GOD, in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." (Hos. iv. 1, 2.)

Lastly, that thou mayest see more plainly what the world is, look upon the head which governs it, and thou wilt understand what his subjects must be. For if indeed the devil is "the prince of this world," as CHRIST says, (S. John xii. 31) what is to be expected of the body that has such a head, and of the people that has such a ruler? This alone is enough to make thee understand what the world is, and what its lovers are. For what is this world but a den of thieves, an army of highwaymen, a wallowing-place of swine, a ship full of convicts, a pool of serpents and basilisks? If the world is like this, says a philosopher, why shall I not depart from a place that is so loathsome, so filthy, so full of treachery, deceit, and wickedness ; wherein there is hardly any trace of good faith, or piety, or justice ; where all vices reign, where the brother prepares an ambush for his brother ; where the son desires his father's death, the wife her husband's, and the husband the wife's ; where there are so few that do not rob or cheat, for many great people as well as little ones steal and thief under specious names : and wherein there burn such flames of coveting, lust, anger, ambition, and other innumerable evils. Who would not desire to escape from such a world? The Prophet desired it when he said, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them : for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." (Jer. ix. 2.) What I have here said concerns all the wicked, but I cannot deny that there are many good men of every class in the world, and for their sakes GOD sustains it.

When thou hast considered these things, see what reason thou hast to abhor so evil a thing wherein, if GOD opened thine eyes, thou wouldst see devils and sins more abundant than motes in the sunbeams. And let this increase thy desire of being out of it, at least in spirit, and make thee say with the

Prophet, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." (Ps. lv. 6.)

These are but a part of the taxes and counterpoises which accompany the wretched joys of the world. Thou seest that they contain more gall than honey, more aloes than sugar. I leave many of their other evils unspoken. For besides that the sweetness of this joy is so short, it is also filthy, for it makes men carnal and filthy; it is brutish, for it makes them brutes; it is foolish, for it makes them fools, and often deprives them of reason; it is unstable, for it abideth never in one stay; and lastly, it is treacherous and false, for at the most critical moment it fails, and leaves us in the lurch.

But one evil I will not leave untold, and that is perhaps the worst of all; that it is false and deceitful, for it appears what it is not, and promises what it cannot give, and thereby infatuates people. For as there are true gold and false gold, true precious stones and false stones, which appear precious but are not, so also is there true and false good, true joy and a false joy which looks like joy, but is another thing; and such is the joy of this world, which deceives us with a counterfeit show. For as Aristotle says that there are many lies, which, though lies, have more appearance of truth than the truth itself; so, and this is much to be noted, there are many evils, which, though evils, have more appearance of good than good itself; and such is the happiness of this world, whereby the ignorant are deceived as birds and fishes are deceived by a bait laid for them. For this is the nature of worldly things; at first they present themselves with a cheerful countenance and a flattering and deceitful aspect, promising joy and contentment; but when experience has undeceived us, we feel the hook under the bait, and see plainly that all is not gold that glitters. Experience will show thee that this is the case with all worldly things. Consider the happiness of the newly married, and thou wilt see that when the first days of wedded life are over, the bright day of their happiness begins to decline, and the dark night of anxieties, necessities, and fatigues, that follow, closes in. For they are soon assailed by troubles with children, sicknesses, absence, jealousies, lawsuits, miscarriages, disasters, and sorrows, ending infallibly with the

death of one or the other, and sometimes this comes very early, and turns the joy of unfinished espousals into the tears of an endless widowhood and loneliness. Can there be a greater fraud or imposture than this? How joyfully does the bride go to her chamber on the day of her espousals, because she has no eyes to see more than the outward appearance. But if she had eyes to perceive the seed-bed of troubles that are sown that day, how much more reason would she have to weep than to laugh. Rebekah desired to have children, but when she had conceived, and the children struggled together within her, she said, "If it be so, why am I thus?" (Gen. xxv. 22.) Oh, how many have their eyes opened in this way, after they have obtained what they desired; finding things very different from what they promised themselves at the beginning.

And what shall I say of employments, honours, preferments, and dignities? How joyful they seem at first sight. But what a swarm of passions, anxieties, envyings, and troubles, are discovered after that first delusive splendour. And what shall we say of those who are engaged in unlawful love? How pleasant do they find the first entrance of this endless labyrinth. But afterwards, what afflictions have they to endure, what bad nights to pass, what dangers to incur. For that fruit of the forbidden tree is guarded by the fang of the venomous dragon; that is, by the cruel sword of the kinsman, or of the jealous husband, by which a man often loses his life, his honour, his property, and his soul, in one moment. Consider in like manner the lives of the avaricious, of the worldly, and of those who seek earthly glory, whether by arms or by favour. In all thou wilt find terrible tragedies, sweet beginnings and disastrous ends; for this is the nature of the cup of Babylon, which is golden without, but within full of abominations. (Rev. xvii. 4.)

What, then, is all the glory of the world but a syren's song to lull us to sleep, a sugared poison to kill us, a viper brightly coloured without, but full of poison within? If it flatters, it is only to deceive; if it raises up, it is to cast us down; if it rejoices, it is to sadden us. It exacts immeasurable interest for all its gifts. If you have a child, and he dies, the sorrow of his death is sevenfold greater than the joy of his birth. A loss

causes more grief than a gain does joy, sickness afflicts more than health gladdens, an insult hurts us more than honour delights us: for by some inexplicable inequality, nature has made evils more powerful to give pain than pleasures to give joy. All this, well considered, shows how false and deceitful worldly joys are.

Behold, then, my Brother, the true countenance of the world, though it shows another outwardly. See what its joys are, short, miserable, dangerous, blind, and full of sin and delusion. What, then, is this world but, as a philosopher has said, a chest of troubles, a school of vanity, a market of deceits, a labyrinth of errors, a gloomy dungeon, a path beset by robbers, a muddy pool, a sea of never-resting movement? What is this world but a barren land, a stony field, a thorny wood, a green meadow full of serpents, a flowery garden without food, a river of tears, a fountain of cares, sweet poison, an idle tale, a pleasant madness? What good things are there in it that are not false, what evils that are not true? Its repose is full of anxiety, its security is unfounded, its fear causeless, its labours fruitless, its tears purposeless, its purposes without result, its hope vain, its sorrow fictitious, and its grief real.

Thou seest how this world resembles hell, for hell is nothing but a place of punishment and of sin, and what more abounds in this world than they do? The Prophet testifies it when he says, that "day and night sin goes about the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it." (Ps. lv. 10, Vulg.) This is the fruit of the world, this is the merchandize that is sold in it, this is the trade that is carried on in every corner of it, "sorrow" and "mischief," evil that is a punishment, and evil that is a sin. If hell, then, is nothing but a place of punishment and sin, may not this world be called a sort of hell, since it contains as much of both? So thought S. Bernard, when he said that if it were not for the seed of hope that we have in this life for the next, he would think this world little better than hell.

But now, that we have so plainly seen how miserable and deceitful worldly joys are, it remains for us to see that the true joy and rest which are not found in the world are found in GOD.



If worldly men well understood this, they would not follow the world as they do. Therefore, I resolve to prove this important truth here briefly, not so much by authority and the testimony of faith as by pure reason.

Thou must know, then, that no creature can have perfect satisfaction till it attains to its last end, that is, to the utmost perfection of which its nature is susceptible. For till it attains to this, it must necessarily be restless and dissatisfied, feeling the want of what is lacking. I ask now, what is the last end of man, in whose possession consists his happiness, or, as theologians call it, his objective beatitude? Undeniably it is GOD, Who is both his first beginning and his last end: and as it is impossible to have two first beginnings, so is it to have two last ends, for this would be to have two Gods. If GOD alone, then, is the last end of man and his ultimate beatitude, and if it is impossible to have two last ends and two beatitudes, then, it is impossible to find beatitude out of GOD. For as surely as the glove being made for the hand and the sheath for the sword are of no use for anything else, so surely the human heart, being made for GOD, can find rest in nothing but GOD. With Him alone it is satisfied, without Him poor and needy. The reason of this is, that the chief subjects of beatitude are man's reason and will, the two noblest powers that are in man, and whilst these are unquiet, he cannot be quiet and at rest. And it is certain that these two powers can by no means be at rest but with GOD alone. For, as S. Thomas says, "Our reason cannot understand or know so many things, but that it has the capacity and the natural desire to know more, if there is more to be known. Neither can it love and enjoy so much good, that it has not power and capacity for more, if more were given it. And therefore, these two powers will never be at rest till they find One Universal Object in Whom are all things, and which, when they have known and loved, there remain no further truths to know, and no more good to enjoy." This is why no created thing, even were it the possession of the whole world, is sufficient to satisfy our heart, but only He for Whom it was created, namely, GOD. So Plutarch writes of a soldier who rose step by step to be an emperor, and when he had reached that long-desired

station, and did not find the satisfaction that he desired, he said, "I have lived in all stations, and have found satisfaction in none." For it is evident that what was created for GOD alone could find no rest out of GOD.

That thou mayest understand this still more clearly, look at the needle of a mariner's compass, and thou wilt see a representation of this necessary doctrine. The nature of this needle, after it has been touched by a loadstone, is to point to the north; for GOD, Who created that stone, gave it the natural inclination to turn always thitherward. Thou wilt see how restless it is, and how it turns and returns till it points in that direction, and then stops at once, and remains as fixed as if it were nailed there. Know, then, that GOD created man with this natural inclination towards Him, as his pole, his centre, and his last end. And therefore, as long as he is out of Him, he will be always like the needle, restless and unquiet, even if he possesses all the treasures in the world, but when he returns to Him, he will be at rest like the needle, for in Him is his only rest. From this, it follows that he alone will be blessed who possesses GOD, and that he will be nearest to blessedness, who is nearest to GOD. And because the righteous are nearest to Him in this life, they are the most blessed, although the world knows nothing of their bliss.

The reason is, that it does not consist in sensual and bodily pleasures, as was asserted by the Epicureans, and after them by the Moors, and after them by the disciples of both, that is, by bad Christians, who deny the law of Mahomet with their lips, but follow no other in their life, and seek no paradise here but his. For how do many of the rich and powerful of this world employ themselves, especially in their youth, but in seeking after and trying every sort of pastime that they can find? And what is this but to make pleasure their last end like Epicurus, and to seek after Mahomet's paradise in this world? Miserable man, followers of such masters, why dost thou not abhor the life of those whose names thou dost abominate and contemn? If thou chooseth the paradise of Epicurus here, be sure thou wilt lose that of CHRIST. The blessedness of man is neither in the body nor in bodily things, as the Moors declare; but it is in the

spirit and in spiritual and invisible things, as is asserted by great philosophers, and as Christians also maintain, though in a different sense. The Prophet signified this when he said, "The king's daughter is all glorious within, in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours, with joy and gladness shall they be brought." (Ps. xlv. 10, 15, 16.) Joy greater than that of all the kings of the world, unless thou sayest that the great men of the earth have more satisfaction than the friends of GOD, a thing which many have denied, joyfully forsaking great estates and riches after they had tasted GOD, and which S. Gregory the Great also will deny, for he made trial of both, being raised by compulsion to the Papal See, in which he always wept and sighed for the poor cell that he had left in the monastery, as a captive in the land of the Moors sighs for his country and his liberty.

But because this delusion is so great and so universal, I will add another reason no less efficacious than the former, to show the lovers of the world how impossible it is to find in it the happiness that they desire. We must first lay down what is very notorious, that many more things are required to make a thing perfect than to make it imperfect, for to be perfect, it must have every one of its perfections, whereas one single defect suffices to make it imperfect. We begin, then, by saying, that in order to make a man perfectly happy, he must have everything to his taste, whilst, if he has but one thing contrary to his liking, that one has more power to make him miserable than all the rest have to make him happy. I have known many who possessed large estates and enormous incomes, and yet lived the saddest life that could be lived, because one thing they greatly desired and could not obtain gave them more torment than all their possessions gave satisfaction. For all that a man possesses does not gladden him so much as one such desire, rankling in his heart, torments him, because it is not the possession of property, but the fulfilment of his desires that makes a man happy. S. Augustine explains this in his Book *De Moribus Ecclesiæ* in these words, "According to my judgment, the man cannot be called happy who has not obtained the possession of what he loves, whatever be the nature of the thing loved. Neither is

he happy who loves not what he possesses, although the thing possessed be very good. For one who desires what he cannot obtain, suffers torment ; and one who obtains what is not worth desiring, is under a delusion ; and one who desires not what ought to be desired, is diseased. And here it follows, that our happiness consists only in the possession and love of the Supreme Good, and without this it cannot exist." Thus, these three things together, possession, love, and the Supreme Good, make a man happy, and without them no man can be so, whatever he may possess.

I might adduce many examples in confirmation of this, but let one suffice for all. Haman, the renowned favourite of King Ahasuerus, who, being offended because Mordecai, who sat in the gate of the palace, "bowed not nor did him reverence," (Esther iii. 2), called for his friends and his wife, and "told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him," and "yet," he said, "all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king's gate." (Esther v. 10, 11, 13.) See how much more power that one vexation had to make his heart miserable than all his prosperity had to make him happy. See also how far man is in this life from happiness, and how near to misery, since so many things are needed for the first, and one single deficiency suffices for the other. Who, then, in this world can escape from misery? What king, what emperor is there so mighty that he has everything according to his will, and nothing to displease him? For even if there were no contradiction on the part of men, who can escape from all the strokes of nature, from all diseases of the body, from all fears and fancies of the soul, which often fears when there is nothing to be afraid of, and afflicts itself without cause. How then dost thou, thou insignificant creature, hope to obtain contentment by the way of the world, by which the greatest monarchs and potentates never obtained it. If it cannot be obtained but by having all good things together, when wilt thou be so happy, being out of GOD, as to lack nothing? This belongs to GOD alone, and if any possess it in any degree in this life, it is the man who loves and possesses GOD, for, according to the laws of friendship, between friends all things are in common.

But if all these evident reasons do not convince thee, and thou preferrest examples to reasoning, look upon Solomon, so renowned for his wisdom; go to him, for he sailed upon this sea more prosperously than any one, discovering and trying all the grandeur and all the diversions of the world, and ask him to give thee an account of the land that he has discovered. Ask him if he found anything that satisfied him, and he will answer, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Eccles. i. 2; xii. 8.) Believe a man of so much experience, who speaks not by calculation but by eyesight. And think not that thou or any man wilt be able to discover anything but what he discovered. What sovereign was there ever in the world wiser, richer, better served, more glorious, or more renowned than he? Who ever tried a greater variety of pleasures, field sports, music, women, splendid array, hunting, and riding, than he tried? And when he had tried all these things he gained no fruit from them but what thou hast heard. Think not that thou wilt find what he found not, for thou hast no other world to seek in, nor any better means of seeking than he had; and since he could not quench his thirst with so plentiful a vintage, think not to satisfy thine with the gleanings. He spent his time on these things, and perchance this was the occasion of his fall, as S. Jerome says in writing to Eustochia. Why wilt thou follow him? But because men are taught by experience rather than by reason, GOD perhaps allowed this man to try all the wealth and pastimes of the world, that when he had tried them he might give such an account of them, and so the disappointment of one man might prevent the disappointment of many, and the enlightenment of one might enlighten all, and they might learn by his experience.

Seeing that these things are so, well may I now cry out with the Prophet, "O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme Mine honour, and have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing." (Ps. iv. 2.) He says rightly, "vanity" and "leasing." For if there were no more in worldly things than vanity, that is nothingness, it would be but a small evil; but there is something far worse, leasing, that is the false appearance by which they make us think them something while they are nothing.

Wherefore Solomon said, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain." (Pro. xxxi. 30.) It would be but a little evil to be vain, if it were not also deceitful, for vanity can do but little harm when it is perceived. But vanity which appears something real, does the most mischief. And this shows the hypocrisy of the world. For as hypocrites try to hide the faults that they commit, so do the rich in this world labour to conceal the miseries that they suffer. The former pass themselves off for saints, being sinners; the latter for happy men, when they are wretched. Come nearer, feel the pulse, thrust thy hand into the side of those who seem so happy, and thou wilt see how the outward appearance gives the lie to what passes within. Some plants grow in the fields, which seem very beautiful when looked on from a distance, but when a man comes near and touches them they give out so bad a smell that he throws them away instantly, the touch of his hands correcting the deception of his eyes. And most of the rich and mighty men of this world are like them, for if thou lookest on their great estates, their magnificent houses, their train of servants, they seem very happy; but if thou comest nearer and searchest into the recesses of their houses and of their souls, thou wilt find the reality very different from the appearance. And therefore many who longed for such positions when they saw them afar off, have rejected them when they beheld them nearer. And in the lives of the emperors we read of one, who was elected emperor by the whole army, but could in no way be persuaded to accept that dignity though he was a heathen, because he knew the thorns that were hidden under that flower outwardly so beautiful.

Then, O ye sons of men, created in the image of GOD, redeemed with His Blood, appointed to be companions of the Angels, why will ye have pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing, thinking to find rest in those false goods, which never gave and never will give it. Why have ye left the table of Angels for the food of beasts? Why have ye left the delights and the joys of Paradise for the disappointment and bitterness of the world? Why do not all the calamities and miseries that ye experience in it, daily suffice to separate you from this cruel

tyrant? We seem like those unhappy women devoted with passionate attachment to some ruffian, who devours and gambles away all that they possess, and moreover ill-uses them, while they still continue madly in love, and follow him in miserable subjection and bondage.

To sum up all that has been said : If it is plain by so many reasons, by so many examples, and by so much experience, that the rest and happiness which we all seek are not to be found in the world but in GOD, why do we not seek them in GOD? S. Augustine gives this advice in few words, saying, "Compass sea and land, and go whithersoever thou wilt, for wherever thou art thou wilt be miserable, if thou goest not to GOD."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*The Conclusion of all that is contained in this Book.*

WE may plainly gather from what has been said that every sort of good that the heart of man can attain here, is included in virtue. And it follows that it is a good so universal and so great that there is nothing in heaven or in earth with which we can better compare it than with GOD Himself. For as GOD is so universal a Good that the perfection of all goodness is to be found in Him, so is it found in some degree in virtue. For of created things some are seemly, some beautiful, some profitable, some pleasant, and some have other perfections; and they are more perfect and more worthy to be loved as they possess more of these perfections. How worthy of love, then, is virtue, wherein all these perfections are found? For if we consider seemliness, what is more seemly than virtue, which is the very root and fountain of all seemliness? If we look for honour, to what are honour and reverence due but to virtue? If we value beauty, what is more beautiful than the countenance of virtue? If mortal eyes could see her beauty, she would draw the whole world after her, as Plato says. If we desire usefulness, what more useful, what more full of hope than virtue? for by it we obtain the Supreme Good. "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour." (Prov. iii. 16.) If we long after happiness, what greater happiness than that of a good conscience, of charity, of peace, of the liberty of the sons of GOD, and of the comfort of the HOLY GHOST, which all accompany virtue? If fame and reputation be our object, "the righteous shall be had in ever-

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lasting remembrance," (Ps. cxii. 6), "but the name of the wicked hall rot," (Prov. x. 7), and vanish like smoke. (Ps. lxxviii. 2.) If we aim at wisdom, there is none greater than to know GOD, and understand how to direct our life by right means to its last end. If it is a sweet thing to be loved by men, there is nothing more lovely or more fit to gain their affection than virtue. For, as Tully says, as from the symmetry and proportion of the members of the body there arises a corporal beauty which attracts all eyes; so from a well-regulated and orderly life there arises a beauty of the whole man, which not only enamours the eyes of GOD and of His Angels, but is attractive even to the wicked and to His enemies.

This is that Good which is altogether good, and has no mixture of evil. Not without reason, then, did GOD send to the righteous that short but glorious message with which we began this book, and with which we will now end it, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." (Isa. iii. 10.) Say to him that in a happy hour he was born, and in a happy hour he shall die, and that blessed shall be his life and his death, and all that follows after. Say to him that in all things it shall be well with him; in his joys, and in his sorrows; in his labours, and in his rest; in his honour, and in his dishonour: for "all things work together for good to them that love GOD." (Rom. viii. 28.) Say to him, that though all the world should be troubled, though the elements should be in confusion, though the heavens should fall to pieces, he has no cause to fear, but to look up, and lift up his head: for his redemption draweth nigh. (S. Luke xxi. 28.) Say to him that it is well, for the best of all good things is prepared for him, namely, GOD, and he is free from the worst of all evils, the companionship of Satan. Say to him that it is well, for his name is written in the Book of Life, (Phil. iv. 3), and GOD the FATHER has taken him for a son, and the SON for a brother, (S. John xxi. 17), and the HOLY GHOST for His living temple, (1 Cor. iii. 16.) Say to him that it is well, for the path that he has chosen and the party that he has joined, are good for him in every way: good for his soul, and good for his body; good towards GOD, and good towards men; good for this life, and good for the next;

for to those who seek the Kingdom of GOD, all other things shall be added. (S. Luke xii. 31.) And if in any temporal matter it is not well with him, this house with patience is a greater good; for to those who have patience, losses are turned into gains, afflictions into rewards, battles into crowns. As often as Laban changed Jacob's wages, thinking to benefit himself, and to hurt his son-in-law, the dream had to be interpreted the contrary way, for he benefited his son-in-law, and hurt himself. (Gen. xxxi. 7.)

Then, O my Brother, why wilt thou be so cruel to thyself, and so much thine own enemy as not to embrace a thing which brings thee much good in every way? What better counsel, what better party canst thou follow than this? Oh, a thousand times "blessed are those that are undefiled in the way, and walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and seek Him with their whole heart." (Ps. cxix. 1, 2.)

If, then, as philosophers say, Goodness is the object of our will, and in consequence the more good a thing is, the more it deserves to be loved and desired, why is thy will so depraved that it neither relishes nor embraces this great and universal Good. How different was it with that holy king who said, "Thy law is in the midst of my heart." (Ps. xl. 10, Vulg.) Not in the corner, not in a secondary place, but in the middle, that is, in the first and best place of all. As much as to say, "This is my greatest treasure, my first business, my chief care." Oh, how different are men of the world: they give the laws of vanity the first place in their heart, and put GOD'S laws in the lowest place. But this holy man, although he was a king, and had much to value and much to lose, put all these things under his feet, and the law of GOD alone in the midst of his heart, knowing very well that if he kept that faithfully, everything else was safe.

What more is wanting to make thee resolve to follow this example, and embrace this great good? If thou considerest obligation, what greater obligation is there than that we owe to the LORD our GOD, only because HE IS THAT HE IS—for all other obligations in the world cannot be called obligations in comparison of this, as we declared at the beginning? If thou

regardest benefits, what benefits are greater than those we have received of Him—for besides that, He created us and redeemed us with His Blood, everything within and without us, our body, our soul, our life, our health, our property, our grace, if we have it, every instant and moment of our life, every good purpose and desire of our soul, everything whatever that has the name of existence or of good, proceeds originally from Him Who is the Fountain of existence and of good? If thou lookest for future gain, let all men and Angels say, what greater gain can there be than to receive everlasting glory, and to be delivered from everlasting torment? And this is the reward of virtue. And if we seek present good, what greater good can there be than those twelve privileges that are enjoyed by all good men in this life, of which we have spoken above at length, the least of which is more able to give us joy and satisfaction than all the rank and treasures in the world? What more can be put in the balance to weigh it down on this side than is promised here? I have so entirely refuted the excuses that worldly men are used to make, that I see no loophole for their escape, unless they willfully stop their ears and shut their eyes against so manifest and plain a truth.

What remains now but that, having seen the perfection and the beauty of virtue, thou shouldst repeat the words that the Wise Man spake of wisdom, virtue's sister and companion, "I loved her, and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty. In that she is conversant with GOD, she magnifieth her nobility; yea, the LORD of all things Himself loved her. For she is privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of GOD, and a lover of His works. If riches be a possession to be desired in this life, what is richer than wisdom, that worketh all things? And if prudence work, who of all that are is a more cunning workman than she? And if a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues, for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life. Therefore, I purposed to take her to me to live with me, knowing that she would be a counsellor of good things, and a comfort in cares and grief." (Wisd. viii. 2-7, 9.) These are

the words of the wise man. What remains, then, but that we conclude this matter as the blessed Martyr S. Cyprian, concludes an Epistle which he wrote to a friend on the Contempt of the World, in the following words :—

“There is but one quiet and safe tranquillity, but one firm and perpetual security ; when a man, delivered from the whirlwinds and tempests of this stormy world, and brought into the safe home and harbour of salvation, lifts up his eyes from earth to heaven, and being admitted to the companionship and favour of the LORD, rejoices to see that all things that are lofty in the eyes of the world are cast down in his heart, he can no longer desire anything of the world, for he is greater than the world.” And further on, he goes on to say, “There is no need of much wealth or honourable employments to obtain this happiness, because it is a gift of GOD, received by the religious soul, for He is so bountiful and so communicable, that, as the sun warms, the day gives light, the fountain flows, and the water falls from on high, so that Divine SPIRIT freely communicates Himself to all. Therefore, do thou, my Brother, who art now enrolled in the heavenly army, strive with all thy might faithfully to observe the discipline of this warfare by habits of piety. Let prayer and reading be thy constant companions : by the one speak to GOD, by the other let GOD speak to thee. Let Him teach thee His commandments, let Him dispose and order all the affairs of thy life. Whom He maketh rich, let us never account poor. The soul that is full of heavenly blessings and abundance cannot suffer hunger or poverty. Then will houses encrusted with precious marbles, and woodwork adorned with gold, seem to thee as dung, for thou wilt understand that it is thou who oughtest thyself to be adorned, and that that is a far better house, wherein as in a living temple GOD reposes, and wherein the HOLY GHOST makes His abode. Let us paint this house, and let the paint be innocence. Let us light it with the bright light of righteousness. Never will it threaten to fall through time or age, never will it lose its lustre when the gold and colours on the walls fade. Painted and artificial things perish, and give no lasting security to their possessors, because they are not a real possession. But this remains with colours ever

bright, with honour unstained, with ever-enduring charity; it cannot fall or fade, although at the resurrection of the body it may be beautified." So far are the words of S. Cyprian.

If any man, moved by the reasons and persuasions in this book, (through the grace and inspiration of GOD, without which nothing good can be done), desires to embrace this good thing virtue, which we have so highly praised, the way to do it shall be declared in another book.

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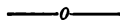
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