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OXFORD:

J. H. PARKER.

MDCCLXXI.

1840

RY ST. MARY'S COLLEGE





A

# TREATISE OF REPENTANCE

AND OF

FASTING,

BY

SYMON PATRICK, D.D.

SOMETIME LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

EDITED BY

FRANCIS E. PAGET, M.A.

RECTOR OF ELFORD,

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

"He that desires to die well and happily, above all things must be careful that he do not live a soft, a delicate, and a voluptuous life. He that would die holily and happily, must in this world love tears, humility, solitude, and repentance."

Ep. Jeremy Taylor.

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U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

A TREATISE  
OF  
REPENTANCE  
AND OF  
FASTING,  
ESPECIALLY OF THE  
LENT FAST.

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In Three Parts.

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Pœnitentia est malè perpetrata plangere, et plangenda  
minimè perpetrare.

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LONDON,  
Printed for *R. Royston*, Bookseller to His  
most Sacred Majesty. 1686.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

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TO those who in an age of lukewarmness and self-indulgence have, by God's great mercy, been preserved in the path of steadfast obedience to the Church's ordinances, following whither she has led, and obeying her admonitions in simplicity, and godly sincerity, no apology can be necessary for the re-publication of a scarce, and (it is to be feared) almost forgotten work by Bishop Patrick on the subject of the observance of Lent. Such persons will be glad to lend their aid to rescue from oblivion whatever fell from the pen of one who was a faithful servant of God in his

generation, “by his knowledge of learning meet for the people, and eloquent in his instructions :”\* and they will not take amiss the attempt to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance with respect to a very generally neglected duty.

But it is rather for the sake of another class that the Editor has been desirous to see a re-print of the present Volume. There may be some who, like himself, have only gradually, and after a struggle with their natural inclinations, been brought to adopt the views herein developed ;—some, who in time past, have been conscious that they were habitually neglecting ordinances which the Church has enjoined, and who yet wanted courage to take the line of unshrinking obedience, who were more disposed to follow the examples of those around them, and to conform to popular feeling and practice

\* Ecclus. xliv. 4.

in such matters, than to expose themselves to the chance of having their motives misrepresented, and their names cast out as evil,—of experiencing the trial described by David; “I wept, and chastened myself with fasting, and that was turned to my reproof. I put on sackcloth also, and they jested upon me.”\* There may be those too, who as parish Priests, have been consulted year after year by members of their flock, as to the proper manner of fulfilling the Church’s intentions with respect to abstinence and mortification of the flesh, and who, through false shame, have perhaps hesitated to make the confession that as with the people, so with the priest, we have *all* greatly fallen away from those habits of self restraint and self discipline prescribed by the Church, and that there is no wise or safe course but one, namely to retrace our steps, and

\* Psalm lxi. 10, 11.

accustom ourselves to those continually-recurring acts of minor self-denial, which, under grace, tend to keep up in the mind a chastened and healthy tone of feeling, fitting us insensibly for greater trials, and preparing us (if need be) for witnessing a good confession, and for rejoicing that we are counted worthy to *suffer* for Christ's sake.

To such persons especially, and to all besides, whose hearts' desire is to learn their duty, and having learned, to practise it, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord," it is hoped that a manual in defence of the Church's views on the subject of repentance and mortification, penned by a Prelate of unquestioned orthodoxy, may be acceptable: that it will be received as the testimony of a calm, unprejudiced witness; and that when so received, it will be acted upon stedfastly and consistently.



To those who may wish to pursue the historical branch of the subject further, it may not be irrelevant to point out in addition to the well known disquisitions in Bingham's *Antiquities* (Book xxi. Ch. 1.) and in Bishop Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium* (Book iii. Ch. 4.) the less-read works of Bishops Hooper and Gunning on the Lent Fast.

In conclusion, the Editor will only add his earnest prayer on behalf of those into whose hands this book may fall, that God would vouchsafe them an humble, teachable, and reverential spirit, granting them both to perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also grace and power, faithfully to fulfil the same, that so denying themselves and dying daily to the things of time, they may be made meet for the pure joys of immortality.





IMPRIMATUR,

JO. BATTELEY,

R<sup>mo</sup> P. D<sup>no</sup> Wilhelm:

Archiep: Cantuar:

a Sacris Domesticis.

Ex. Edib. Lamb.

Oct. 31, 1685.





## The Preface to the Reader.

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THE author of this little Treatise, designed it as a manual, not of controversy, but regular piety, and for common use. He did not, therefore, think fit to add any thing by way of disputation concerning those doctrines and practices in the Roman Church, which respect Fasting and other bodily austerities.

It had been very easy for him to have written a more learned book; but, all things considered, he could not (it may be) have published, at this time, any thing more seasonable, and generally useful.

We abound with books upon other practical subjects; though, by reason of the several tempers and capacities of readers, which in the same matter, require variety of form, we cannot complain of a superfluity.

But, upon this argument, we meet not with great plenty of distinct treatises, unless we put such into the number as the writers have transcribed, some from fancy, others from severity of nature. For Epicures are not more humourous in their rules of luxury, than Monasticks are in their rules of abstinence.

It is happy, therefore, for the people that they have gained this Tract concerning Fasting, in which the directions and persuasives to a mortified life are not embased, either with capricious affectation, or superstitious rigour. We have need of such directions, and of a strict and temperate practice suitable to them.

I intend not, by saying this, to accuse all the Christians of the Church of England as Libertines; but to quicken those who live in a remissness, which is not answerable to her constitution. I know many in our communion who lead lives exceeding regular, and who exercise themselves in that which is truly Fasting. One day at least in every week they either abstain till night, or use a small quantity of some ordinary thing, which, in this

northern air, may keep the body from being unserviceable to the mind. Whereas often amongst others, their Fasts, if they continue all day, are concluded with a luxurious supper, or (which is the common use) are but the using of another kind of diet, and then they may eat a plentiful dinner: though this change of diet (especially among the rich) is no more fasting, than change of apparel is going naked. An evening collation also, is even then allowed; and to drink at all times of the day (according to their casuists) doth not dissolve a Fast. Filliutus, in particular, saith, that drinking water, or wine, or beer, whether before or after dinner, whether for nourishment or not, does not break a man's Fast.<sup>1</sup>

There is the like mistake in a thing near a kin to this, which it may not be amiss, in this place, to correct, because some good people (I see) are apt to fall into it. There is a complaint amongst us of want of cells and cloisters, in which the exercises of mortification might

<sup>1</sup> Tract. xxvii. Pars 11. c. 2. Q. 10.

be (as they think) more advantageously performed. But as we do not enviously lessen the true privileges of other places, or scornfully forbear to wish among ourselves any good which is in others; so we really believe it is much better to be without such religious houses, than to have them so constituted and governed as they generally are in other countries, and as they sometime were amongst ourselves, where they have too much served either to feed sloth, or to heat melancholy by mystical arts of musing into distraction; in which things, human nature, as it is in imperfect man, needs no assistances.

Blessed be God, we have at this day, in this judicious and pious Church, very great conveniencies for the promoting of a holy and mortified, and, if need be, a very retired life. The members of it may be recluses in both senses of the word, which signifies, truly, persons at liberty, and, abusively, persons shut up. For there is not (that I know of) any city, or scarce a great town, where there are not religious guides of good ability, public prayers morning



and evening, frequent sacraments, pious furniture for the closet, together with good numbers of persons devoutly disposed : and especially in and by London these happy conveniences are abundantly afforded, and (I thank God) by very many, heartily embraced. Now if any are inclined to live more privately, and (the state of the world, and the affairs of their families, well allowing it) to dedicate a great part of their time to heavenly contemplation, and to the more immediate worship of God ; they may serve the holy purposes of devotion, by retired lodgings in such cities, and nigh such Churches, generally much better (in my opinion) than by taking a habit, and making a vow, and committing themselves, as it were, to a religious prison.

They may be as devout, and as abstemious as they please : they may choose their conversation, which is not such if it be not agreeable. They may go into the world as often as they see they can be useful to it ; and they may shut it out when they judge its company to be inconvenient : and as soon as their love of

solitude is known, and the loose and impertinent find their discourse not relished, and their visits not returned, they will not uncivilly obtrude upon them. All this the pious amongst us may do upon choice; which is the true salt of every sacrifice we offer to God. They may do it without confinement to one air, and one place, to a society, in which generally there is a faction which makes it uneasy to persons of quiet tempers, to the temptation of coveting forbidden liberty, to offices which, in their nature, are superstitious, and, by their length and perpetual repetition, tedious and burthensome.

They may retire without being loosed from the bonds of their duty to their natural parents, which, that great pretender to mortification, the abbé de la Trappe<sup>2</sup> will have to be cancelled by the new monastic alliance, and, as they call it, the moral death and burial of the

<sup>2</sup> Des devoirs de la vie Monastique, Tom. 2. Chap. 16. Quest. 12, 13, p. 55, Ed. 2. p. 57.—“ Si les enfans en se retirant —ont perdu les parens qu’ ils y avoient selon la chair; la Religion leur en a rendu d’ autres selon l’ Esprit.”

religious in a cloister. They may be orderly without confinement to such rules as are either absurd, unprofitable, or unfit for their temper, strength, or present circumstance. For example sake, they need not be stinted, in the three hot months, to just so many draughts without the especial licence of the superior; they need not be obliged to have all their sallads dressed with cheese and oil; they need not be forbidden to sleep in any afternoon which comes not betwixt the Ides of May and September; or be enjoined, as soon as they are risen from their tables, to betake themselves to their prayers: which rules, with many others, where discretion has had a less share in the forming of them than imagination, we find in a body of them collected by Menardus.<sup>3</sup> And yet you are not to esteem of such rules<sup>4</sup> as human inventions, but as laws written by the very finger of God, and received (as

<sup>3</sup> Menard. Conc. Reg. p. 713, 715, 815.

<sup>4</sup> Des devoirs, Tom. 1. Chap. 2. Q. 3. p. 6.—“Comme les loix ecrites du doigt de Dieu.”

they say the rule of St. Pachomius was) by the ministry of an Angel. And you are to believe the Superior is the Vicar of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Doubtless a mixed life is the most profitable for the state of the world; and St. Austin himself esteemed it to be so; and Monsieur Godeau,<sup>6</sup> though a Bishop of the Roman Church, agrees with him in that opinion. So that the words of David, "Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder" which (they say) determined the thoughts of the Count de Bouchage<sup>7</sup> to a monastic retreat, should (one would think) both by the sound, and by the moral sense of them, have rather released him from the narrow limits of his pensive inclination.

But I forget that I am not to make this entrance too large; and I ought not any longer to detain the reader from the book itself. I will therefore say no more, but that I wish this pious treatise may come into many hands before that solemn time of mortification, which is approaching; and that it may be a means,

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> *La vie de S. A.* p. 560, 561.

<sup>7</sup> *L' Hist. du Card. de Joyeuse*, p. 19.

by promoting true Christian sobriety, to counterbalance that sensuality amongst us, which needs such a real and exemplary reprehension.



# A TABLE

OF THE

Vigils, Fasts, and Days of Abstinence,  
*To be observed in the Year.*

## THE EVENS OR VIGILS BEFORE

The Nativity of our Lord.

The Purification of the Blessed Virgin *Mary*.

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

Easter-Day.

Ascension-Day.

Pentecost.

Saint *Matthias*.

Saint *John Baptist*.

Saint *Peter*.

Saint *James*.

Saint *Bartholomew*.

Saint *Matthew*.

Saint *Simon* and Saint *Jude*.

Saint *Andrew*.

Saint *Thomas*.

All Saints.

*Note*, That if any of these Feast-Days fall upon a *Monday*, then the Vigil or Fast-Day shall be kept upon the *Saturday*, and not upon the *Sunday* next before it.

## Days of Fasting, or Abstinence.

I. The Forty Days of Lent.

II. The Ember-Days at the Four Seasons, being the  
Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after  
The First Sunday in Lent.

The Feast of Pentecost.

*September 14.*

*December 13.*

III. The three Rogation-Days, being the Monday,  
Tuesday, and Wednesday, before Holy-Thursday,  
or the Ascension of our Lord.

IV. All the Fridays in the Year, except *Christmas-Day*.



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TREATISE OF  
REPENTANCE AND FASTING.

Part first.

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CHAPTER I.

OF REPENTANCE IN GENERAL.

THE nature of Repentance may be understood, by the use of the word “repent,” the very first time we meet with it in the book of God, where it is said, “It *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, for it *repenteth* me that I have made them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 6, 7.

I find no words wherein the affections of penitent minds are better and more fully expressed, than these : in which, Moses, speaking concerning the Divine mind and will, in the language of men, hath given us a lively description of the temper of our own hearts, if we truly repent, that we have offended God.

For, first, when a man repents of any thing, that thing displeases him very much. Which is the very foundation of all that is here said by Moses, concerning God's repenting that he had made mankind : with whom he was highly displeased, for their most wicked behaviour towards their Almighty Creator, and bountiful Benefactor.

Then follows, in the next place, sadness, grief and sorrow of mind ; which as naturally flows from the displeasure that any thing gives us, as joy doth from complacency and good liking. And proportionable to the dislike we have of any thing, will be our sadness that we meddled with it : so that if we greatly dislike any action we have done, it will grieve us (as the phrase is in Moses) at the very heart.

Upon which follows a ceasing to do that action, which gives us such displeasure, that it creates us inexpressible grief and sorrow.

Nor is this all, but condemning in himself what he hath done, such a penitent wishes, and, as far as he hath power, endeavours, to have it undone: and therefore, we may be sure, would not upon any account do it, if it were to be done again.

In testimony whereof, because the thing cannot be undone, he takes care and uses caution for the time to come, that it be done no more; and thereby labours to destroy the whole body of sin (as God destroyed man from the face of the earth) because he heartily repents that ever he committed it, and would gladly obliterate, if it were possible, even the memory of it.

We ought not to think that we have true "Repentance towards God,"<sup>2</sup> as St. Paul calls it, unless we feel our hearts thus affected.

For it is confessed by every one that hath any sense of God, that all things which we do are not alike pleasing unto Him; but with some

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 21.

things He is highly offended : and that if we be not of His mind, but so cross, as to please ourselves in those things which are displeasing unto Him ; we run ourselves thereby into a state of opposition and enmity to His majesty.

Upon which when we reflect, we cannot be well satisfied with ourselves, but much displeased at what we have done : because we have been so bold as to contradict God ; and by that means are become guilty before Him ; and obnoxious to such punishments, as He shall think fit to inflict upon us.

And if we believe the holy scriptures, the punishments due to this contempt of God, are so frightful, that no guilty man can think of them without some horror : and not only be touched with a sense of his folly and of his danger ; but be very much troubled and afflicted (whether he respect God or himself) that he hath, as the scripture speaks, walked contrary to Him : and thereby made himself liable to His heavy displeasure.

And therefore condemning what he hath done (which he cannot look upon without

shame and confusion of face, as well as with grief and sorrow) he resolves to do so no more : but to betake himself hereafter unto a new life ; conformable to God's holy will and pleasure in all things. In the former of which, that which we call Repentance begins ; and in the latter it ends. An unfeigned sorrow and grief that we have offended God, is the beginning of it : and a serious purpose of amendment of life completes it.

All this is agreed by those that write upon this subject. And therefore, my business is only to show that the first part of repentance, doth not consist merely in that inward compunction, and grief, and shame, and heaviness of heart, which are the necessary effects of a true sense of what a sinner hath done, and of what he deserves to suffer : but likewise in such outward expressions of this inward sense, as are suitable to the dismal condition, into which he hath thrown himself ; and naturally flows from a heart deeply affected with its guilt, and duly afflicted and grieved for it.

## CHAPTER II.

## OF SORROW FOR SIN, IN PARTICULAR.

THAT we ought to be inwardly troubled in our mind, and exceedingly grieved, afflicted and pained at the very heart, to think we have offended so good and gracious a Father, as hath called us into a state of salvation by Christ Jesus, and thereby lost his grace and favour, is a thing, as I have said already, confessed, without any the least dispute about it. And it is as much acknowledged, I hope, that it ought not to end, till it hath wrought in us a sincere resolution to do so no more. It is senseless to think of recovering his favour; unless we be thus piously disposed.

But I shall prove as plainly, that it becomes true penitents, to make such outward expressions of those inward affections, as may not only show to all the world that they are

heartily sorry, and ashamed of their folly, their falseness, their ingratitude, and all the disorders they have committed, to the dishonour of God, and the disturbance of the peace and good estate of the world ; but also satisfy themselves, that their affliction is more than a transient passion ; and be a security likewise to them, from relapsing into that wickedness, which, if they be sincere penitents, they resolve to forsake.

The soul and the body are so near neighbours, or rather friends ; that one of them cannot be concerned in any thing, but the other must bear its part therein. And therefore, as they accompany one another in all other actions, so it is fit and just and necessary, that they should do in Repentance. They have done evil together ; and therefore it is but reasonable, that they join in their humiliations and sorrow for it, and in their abhorrence of it. When the heart is heavy and sad, the body also should put on the habit of a mourner, who laments the greatest mischief that could befall him.

In treating of which, I shall

1. Show, what these outward expressions of sorrow and grief are : and whence they arise. And then,

2. Briefly demonstrate, that they have been the practice of christian people : who ever thought the condition of a great sinner so doleful, that it called for the bitterest lamentations. And

3. Lay before you, as briefly, the uses for which they serve ; and the profit we may receive by them.

4. And lastly, give some cautions, to prevent the abuse of them ; that we may not receive damage by those things, which are intended for our advantage.





## CHAPTER III.

## CONCERNING OUTWARD ACTS OF SORROW.

WHAT the outward acts of sorrow are, which the sense of their guilt extorts from true penitents, we may learn from the prophet Joel; if we read seriously the 12th and 13th verses of the second chapter: where God calls upon them to turn unto him, with all their heart; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. The main thing here required, was to turn from their evil ways sincerely, and without any reserve: but an observant reader cannot but take notice, that this was also to be performed, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. Their hearts were to be rent in the first place, and not their garments, (as it there follows,) for otherways there was no hope they would turn unto the Lord: but their garments were to be rent also (it being

a part of mourning) as the effect, and the declaration of the renting of the heart ; and as a token they meant not to continue any longer in their sins, but to part with them, and to be entirely separated from them.

But to prevent all fancies which may possibly start up in any man's mind, that the duty I am about to recommend to them, is proper only to the Old Testament spirit and times, (as some have been taught to speak,) I shall desire the reader only to study two other verses in the epistle of St. James: which comprehend I think, all that belongs to this matter. "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep : let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up."<sup>3</sup>

He had exhorted them in the foregoing words, to "draw nigh to God,"<sup>4</sup> in a deep sense that they were great sinners, to acknowledge their guilt, to deprecate His displeasure, and to resolve to be better men ; both by cleansing their hands, and by purifying their hearts :

<sup>3</sup> St. James iv. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> St. James iv. 8.

and that with all sincerity and singleness of spirit; being no longer double-minded, (sometimes resolving to do well, and then revolting to their beloved sins again) but thoroughly and entirely returning to him in new obedience. And then, just as the prophet Joel required the Israelites to turn unto the Lord with all their heart; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: so the apostle requires the Christians to whom he writes, to draw nigh to God after the same manner; with upright hearts, and with no less, but rather greater tokens of their inward trouble that they had offended Him. For he bids them not only to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: but to refrain from all mirth and joy, and to be in heaviness: without which humiliations it was not fit for great sinners to present themselves before an offended majesty, or to hope for mercy from Him.

Which words if we examine by the phrases of the Old Testament, which are our best guides for the interpreting of the New; we shall find there is not one of them, but signifies some

outward expression of grief and sorrow : which was used by devout people, in token of hearty repentance.

When they kept their great Fast, enjoined by the law on the day of expiation, it was called a “ day of afflicting their souls,”<sup>5</sup> which explains the first word in St. James, and shows it to be the very same with that in Joel, “ turn unto Him with fasting.”

And if we search farther, wherein this afflicting themselves consisted, we shall find an explication of the rest that follow. For it did not consist barely in abstinence from food ; but in putting on also the habit of mourners (sackcloth and ashes) and in the action of renting the garments, in bewailing and lamenting their condition : which are the next phrases in St. James, “ mourn and weep.”

And if we still proceed farther in our inquiry, we shall find that on such days of afflicting themselves they also abstained from all sorts of pleasure ; they would not so much

<sup>5</sup> Lev. xvi. 29, 31. Isa. lviii. 5.

as wash their faces, much less anoint their heads; no, nor look up, but hanged down their heads, in confusion of face. Music and songs were perfect strangers to them; nor would they take any rest; but they punished their bodies with watchings, and lying on the bare ground: to testify their sorrow and grief for what evil they had done, or for the evils they felt or feared. And accordingly here it follows in the Apostle, in perfect conformity to those customs, "let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness," or into hanging down of the head, with shame and grief.

And if we go on to search into the ground of all this, it will further illustrate the thing in hand. For it is visible, that upon occasion of any sorrowful accidents, they were wont in those Eastern countries, to express their sense of it, by putting on sackcloth, lying on the ground, strowing ashes on their heads, and such like things. Which is notorious, more especially, in case of the loss of their friends, and near relations. Thus Jacob

bewailed the supposed death of his son Joseph,<sup>6</sup> and thus Rispah the concubine of Saul lamented her children, whom the Gibeonites hanged on a gibbet,<sup>7</sup> and thus Job, when he heard of the calamity befallen his family, "rent his mantle, shaved his head, fell down upon the ground, and remained in silence, without speaking a word, for seven days."<sup>8</sup> And thus his friends also, hearing of all this evil, and beholding, when they came to visit him, in what a lamentable condition he lay himself, "lift up their voice and wept, and rent every man his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, and sat down with him upon the ground in silence."<sup>9</sup> Nor are there wanting numerous examples (which I shall omit) of the very same customs among other nations, as well as among the Jews and these Arabians.

No wonder then if pious men, who were touched with a sense of their sin, and of the divine displeasure, used the very same signs and testimony of their grief, which were cus-

<sup>6</sup> Gen. xxxvii. 34, 35.      <sup>7</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 10.      <sup>8</sup> Job i. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Job ii. 12, 13.

tomary in other cases of far less consequence. For what greater mischief can befall us, than the loss of God's favour? or rather, what calamity is equal, or nearly approaching to it? and therefore, there is more reason to bewail our offences against Him (which put us out of His favour) most heavily, and with the most doleful tokens of our sorrow for them; than there is to bewail the loss of the dearest friend we have in this world, or the greatest misfortune, as we term it, that can possibly befall us.

And accordingly we read that when holy Job humbled himself before God, for his too peremptory vindication of his own innocence, he doth it in the same manner, that he had bewailed his afflictions, saying, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>1</sup> And the Prophets often called upon the Israelites, to put on sackcloth, and to bewail themselves in ashes; when they would have them mourn for their sins, and "lament after the Lord,"<sup>2</sup> that is, seek the recovery of His favour by an hearty repentance.

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. vii. 2.

For they did not think it fit, for grievous Offenders to look up to Him, whose authority they had affronted, without tears in their eyes; and a sad and sorrowful countenance; in the most mournful posture and habit; and the bitterest expressions of their grief and inward anguish: as knowing that they deserved to be unprofitably bewailing their sins in a more dismal place, where there is nothing, but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Why? will some say; doth God delight to hear our shrieks and groans? or would you have us be our own tormentors? is it reasonable a man should be cruel to his own flesh; and make it his business, to put himself to pain? There is nothing from which human nature more abhors, than sorrow and grief; and nothing is more friendly to it, than pleasure and joy.

“Every thing” it has been said, “that saddens and afflicts us, is a real disease and sickness:” to which we cannot but be averse, and by all means study to avoid.



Unto which I answer, as Solon did to one who told him when he wept for his son, that he troubled himself, but profited nothing by it. "That is the very reason," said he, "why I cannot but weep." So, when men say, that nature is hurt by sorrow, the reply may justly be; that is one of the things which should make you sorrowful: to see how you have spoiled the beauty and goodliness of human nature; how you have sullied it by your sins, and darkened the brightness and cheerfulness of it; by eclipsing the light of God's countenance, which we were made to enjoy and to rejoice therein; and causing this world to become nothing but a scene of misery, a place of mourning and lamentation; either for our sins, or for our sufferings.

It is a sad sight indeed to behold a creature made for great happiness, to be now so altered, that in all the creation there is not one so full of complaints as man: but it will be a sadder, if his first complaint be not of the cause of all this, which is our sins. These, if they be not sorrowfully bewailed, are the most grievous

and lamentable of all things else; in the account of those who rightly weigh them.

But besides this, we must consider; that this is the way to make men leave their sins; and so be restored to true joy and gladness. If they can take pleasure in evil courses, as well as in good, they will never be at the trouble of an exchange: nor scarce think of it, till they be mourning there, where tears will never cease to flow, and drown them in eternal sorrows.

Nay, more than this, to think of our sins without due sorrow and grief for them, is in truth to repeat them. So far are they from leaving them, who are not grieved for them; that whensoever they call them to mind without such grief, it is, in effect, again to commit them. Their minds are pleased with them; and there they do that over again, which was done before in outward actions. Upon this score therefore we are to be afflicted for them; and if we be, mourning, and tears, and sad lamentations will not be wanting, proportionable to the affliction which they give our spi-

rits. According to that saying of Philemon, "Grief, like a tree, hath tears for its fruit." Which spring out of sorrow, as a natural expression thereof: and are a means, as I shall show more hereafter, to remove the cause. And what greater cause, as I have said, is there for our grief and heaviness, and all their mournful attendants, than this; that we have offended Him by our sins, who is able to punish them in endless sorrows? When lesser things produce sometimes a flood of tears; we cannot but conclude, without any other reason for it, that they are justly expected, in a very great measure, here.



## CHAPTER IV.

OF THE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE IN THIS MATTER.

AND thus the constant practice of the christian Church, hath expounded these words of St. James : by requiring such humiliations, affliction, and doleful bemoaning of themselves, from those who had so grievously offended God, as to be thrown out of their communion, before they would receive them again into it. Which is a thing so notorious, that by the word Repentance, among the ancient writers of religion, nothing else is commonly meant, but open confession of their sins, with sad lamentations of them, and of the woeful condition into which they had brought them.

There are many remarkable things to this purpose in the records of the Church, more than enough to fill a much bigger book than this ; if I would give myself liberty to relate with what humble prostrations, with what

tears and doleful lamentations, "*concilicati et concinerati*" (as Tertullian's words are) covered with hair-cloth, and buried, as it were, in ashes, with fastings and watchings, with sighs and groans and mournful voices, looking dismally lean, pale and meagre, by long grief and neglect of their bodies, penitents were wont to cast themselves down upon the earth, and not only supplicate God's mercy, but beg and beseech in the most miserable manner, the pardon and prayers of their christian brethren.

But my design is not only to show that all this, which was the unquestionable practice of the early ages of the Church, had its foundation in the very beginning of our religion, and was directed by the Apostles themselves, who when any sinner was so senseless that he was not at all afflicted for the crimes he had committed, so impudent that he was not ashamed of the foulest wickedness (and therefore was to be excommunicated and cut off from the body of Christ) required the whole Church to bewail his sin and his misery, in

the most sad and mournful manner : and therefore we may be confident this was expected from the sinner himself, when by this means he was awakened out of his lethargy, to see into what a woeful condition he had brought himself by his offences.

For this is the thing which St. Paul blames in the Corinthian church, that when an eminent person among them had committed such fornication, as was not so much as named among the Gentiles, they were so far from being concerned about it, that they were puffed up, with a vain opinion of their dearness to God, because of their spiritual gifts wherein they abounded. Whereas they should “have rather mourned, that he who had done this deed, might be taken away from among them.”<sup>3</sup> That is, they should have met together in the Church, to separate such a person from their society, with wailings and lamentations over him : in token of their own sorrow for, and detestation of, so foul a fact ; and that they looked upon him as a lost man,

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.

till he recovered himself by repentance, and mourned, as they had done, for his sins.

The Jews, it is well known, when any man was to be punished with death for blasphemy, and such like crimes, proclaimed a fast (as we read in the story of Naboth,<sup>4</sup>) that is, they mourned, and wept, they put on sackcloth, and humbled themselves; they did all other things of this nature, which might testify their sorrow that God should be so dishonoured, and the offender should bring himself to such a miserable end. Which the Church thought it reasonable to imitate, when they cut off any person from their body (as a number of Ecclesiastical writers inform us, and this passage in St. Paul instructed them) they fasted, they wept, they put themselves into the habit of mourners, and stripped themselves of their ornaments; to declare their abhorrence of the sins which were thus punished, and to express their grief for the scandal they had given; which hereby they had wiped off.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings xxi.

Nay, the Apostles themselves (which is still more) did not refrain from these lamentations ; but, when they in person executed this sentence against any sinner, humbled themselves, and gave the most sensible tokens of their inward grief and sorrow. This we may learn from the same St. Paul, in his next Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>5</sup>

Where, after he had mentioned several sins which they had not reformed, he concludes in these words, “I fear lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.” To “bewail” these men, was to punish them with excommunication ; which was accompanied with wailings and lamentations over them, as men in a sad and most dangerous condition ; and very much “humbled,” that is, afflicted and grieved, the Apostles themselves when they considered it : who thought God himself ex-

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.



pected it from them; for whose sake, and to preserve a due regard to his sacred Majesty, St. Paul foresaw he must, in all likelihood, be forced to appear in the habit of a mourner, when he came again among the Corinthians.

In short, just as men mourn for their friends who are dead *corporally*; so did they bewail those who were dead *spiritually*. Which they ought sure much more to have done themselves, if there had been any sense remaining in them, and they had not been dead in trespasses and sins: and did bewail, no doubt, as soon as by this severity they were awakened out of their sleep, and arose from the dead, (as St. Paul speaks,<sup>6</sup>) that is, had any motion of spiritual life appeared again in them, and were brought to a feeling of their lamentable condition.

Which lamentations of themselves sometimes continued so long, even by the inclination of the penitents themselves, that they did not think fit, when they had highly offended God, to leave them off, as long as they lived.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. v. 14.

The Deacon's wife in Asia, is a famous instance of it: who having been seduced and corrupted in her body by Marcus, whom she followed a long time, but at last by the diligence of the brethren converted, spent all her days in penance, bewailing and lamenting the corruption she had suffered by that Magician: as Epiphanius relates out of Irenæus.<sup>7</sup>

Many such observations might be heaped up, and more added out of the Holy Scriptures; but this is sufficient, I think, to reform the error, which is crept in among us, *that outward humiliations and bodily afflicting ourselves, signify nothing in the Christian religion; but inward grief and sorrow doth all. This is not Apostolical Doctrine; and the Church of God hath always thought otherways.* St. Paul himself teaches us, in another Epistle, that though godliness (all the actions of christian piety) be the chief thing; yet bodily exercise is not to be looked upon as altogether unprofitable. “Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hæres: xxxiv. 3.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 8.

So we now read in our printed Bibles (“profiteth *little*”) but I have reason to think the translation at first was, “profiteth *a little* :” because in the margent, referring it to time, it is translated thus, “or, for a little time.”<sup>9</sup> Which shows they thought there was some profit in bodily exercise, though but little in comparison with the profit of godliness itself. And so it is expressed in the Greek more clearly and fully, “*bodily exercise is profitable,*” πρὸς ὀλίγον “*a little way,*” (as it may be rendered,) serves to some purpose, and is useful in its kind. And therefore the Apostle doth not speak slightly of it (as men are apt to understand his words in our translation) but rather commends it; though with diminution, in respect of something else, which was far better and more to the purpose.

Now by bodily exercise I suppose no man is so weak as to imagine the Apostle meant such exercise as is necessary for the health, or the pleasure and recreation of the body

<sup>9</sup> As St. Austin (Cap. 33. de moribus Eccl. Cath.) and most of the ancients expound it.

(there being no occasion to speak of such matters) but rather intended such exercises as did afflict and impair the body, and may help a little way to conserve or restore the health of the soul. Such as fastings, watchings, lying on the ground, eating the bread of affliction (as the Scripture calls it) that is coarse food, abstaining from conjugal pleasures, and in general, all ill treatments of the body; which served to humble it, and bring down the pride and wantonness of it. Epiphanius thus reckons them up; when he speaks of the exercises that accompanied their prayers, in the week before Easter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Χαμευνίαι, ἀγνεΐαι, κακοπάθειαι, ξηροφαγίαι, ἐνχαι, ἀγρυπνίαι τε, καὶ νηστέιαι. Epiph: Hæres: lxxv.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE USE OF BODILY EXERCISES.

THAT these exercises are something profitable, is the next thing I propounded to be treated of in this discourse. I am sure they are very becoming a great offender, though they be the least that God expects from him : and therefore they ought not to be utterly decried and disgraced ; while we teach there is something much beyond them, without which they will do us but little good.

1. For first, they are natural expressions of the sense a man hath of his own vileness and baseness ; and may very much conduce to promote it, and make him more apprehensive of it.

2. And they are as natural expressions of the sense he hath, of his abuse of the good things which God allowed him to enjoy ; and of his grief and sorrow, which that sad reflection works in him.

3. They declare also a sense of his unworthiness to enjoy those good things any longer: he acknowledging by his fasting and abstinence (for instance) that his daily bread, yea the least morsel of it, is too good for him; and by his throwing off all his ornaments, that he deserves to be stript of all other blessings, which God hath adorned him withal.

4. They are a just acknowledgement likewise of his offences, which have made him thus unworthy: and plainly declare also that he looks with detestation upon those evil courses, which have made him not to look like himself.

5. Further, they are a sign of a man's intention and purpose to alter the whole course of his life; and to become quite another man.

6. Nay, more than this, they are a beginning of self-denial; and some small exercise of it, in things which fleshly nature may very much desire: as we all know, it doth good meat and drink, fine clothes, ease, and all manner of pleasures.

7. And further, they may help also to mortify the evil that is in any of those desires;

and dispose a man to avoid those sins more carefully hereafter, which have procured him so much grief, affliction, and trouble. That is, they are not merely testifications of our grief for sins past, and our detestation of what we have done amiss; which is the first part of repentance: but, if they be rightly used, may prove a means to secure our resolution of amendment (which they also naturally testify) and help to preserve us from revolting to those sins, of which we express so great detestation, and feel to be very afflictive; which is the other and best part of repentance.

8. They may serve also to dispose a man to seriousness in meditation and prayer; by taking his thoughts off from all worldly things, as little or nothing worth.

9. More particularly, they may serve to raise in our mind, a due valuation of the happiness of the other world; when we despise all the enjoyments of this. Which was a doctrine St. Matthias was wont to press (as Clemens Alexandrinus reports his words<sup>2</sup>)

<sup>2</sup> L. iii. Strom. p. 436.

σαρκὶ μὲν μάχεσθαι καὶ παραχρησθαι &c., to oppose the flesh, and to treat it ill ; not suffering it to have its desires ; ψυχῇ δ' αὖξεν, but to nourish the soul by faith and by knowledge : for by substracting from the body, we make provision for the soul's increase in wisdom and goodness. Which end of abstinence we are taught in the Collect for the first Sunday in Lent ; wherein we pray, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness.

10. And, to omit other things, I see no reason why I should not add, in the last place, that these severities are acts of a just revenge, which a sinner takes upon himself, for his former excesses ; by intemperance, luxury, impurity, pride and vain-glory.

They are but just expressions of a due indignation against his past follies ; and a becoming chastisement, which he inflicts upon himself for his licentious way of living.

St. Paul himself mentions this revenge, as the last effect of the Corinthian's sorrowing



after a Godly sort.<sup>3</sup> “For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a Godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you (to satisfy the Apostle) yea, what clearing of yourselves (of approving what he condemned) yea, what indignation (against the offender) yea, what fear (of the Apostolical censures) yea, what vehement desire (to recover, I suppose, the Apostle’s good opinion) yea, what zeal (for the Apostle’s authority, which some slighted) yea, what revenge;” (in inflicting punishments suitable to the offence.)

By which word *revenge* it is true (and I will not in the least prevaricate in this argument) the best interpreters, and I believe rightly, understand the punishment lately inflicted, by the sentence of excommunication pronounced against the incestuous person, according to the Apostle’s order. Yet it is manifest, I think, that this revenge was taken by the Church, because the man did not take it on himself. If he had been sadly afflicted, if

he had humbled himself by fasting and weeping and mourning, by confessing his sin, by confusion of face, and all other signs of a true penitent; the Church had not proceeded to such a degree of severity against him, as to deliver him up to Satan. And such a revenge, whether enjoined by the Church, or inflicted by a man's self, the Apostle makes the fruit of a pious sorrow.

That sharp grief wherewith the heart is wounded, when it reflects upon its disobedience to a most gracious Father; those stings, which a mind conscious of such foul ingratitude, feels in itself; that shame, that self-displacency, and loathing, which arises out of a serious sense of a man's offences, work in him such a detestation of his former course of life, that it will incline him by afflicting and punishing himself, after such a manner as I have described, to prevent the like again.



## CHAPTER VI.

THE ABUSE OF THESE EXERCISES OUGHT NOT TO  
HINDER THE USE: WHEREIN A FURTHER ACCOUNT  
IS GIVEN OF THEM.

AND this course ought not to be laid aside, because some have turned this just revenge, by inflicting punishments upon themselves, such ends as I have named, into a proper satisfaction of the justice of God. Which is the fault of the Church of Rome; who, by *abusing* many profitable things, has made others throw them quite away.

To fancy any such satisfaction, as they speak of, (which is variously explained by them, and by some very injuriously unto our Lord Christ) is to stretch the virtue of these things too far: but if we therefore shall wholly reject them, that will be to start aside as much the other way. The Church of God, in the purest times, before the birth of those errors, which are

comprehended under the name of Popery, most earnestly recommended and enjoined such afflictions of the body, without any design of satisfying the divine justice for their sins; and yet with an intention to punish themselves for them: in hope that God would graciously spare them, and accept of their unfeigned repentance; of which these were the signs and tokens; and also the beginnings of a new life, and the means to bring it to greater perfection.

The very fast of Lent, was anciently prolonged to that number of days of which it now consists, for the benefit of the public penitents, that were in the Church: who by such humiliations, as I have mentioned, gave satisfaction to the Church (which was another end of their afflicting themselves) and humbly begging their pardon, promised hereafter to be better Christians: and so prepared themselves to be reconciled, and admitted to the Holy Communion at Easter.

It would be endless to recite all the passages we meet with in Ecclesiastical writers, con-

cerning this matter; that penitents should by such bodily afflictions, as have been often named, take revenge upon themselves for their former wickedness; and undo what they had done before, by doing just the contrary.

St. Chrysostom mentioning those words of John Baptist, "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," puts this question, "how may we thus fructify?" and resolves it in this manner; "if we do directly contrary to our former sins. Hast thou stolen another man's goods? begin now to give away thine own. Hast thou been a fornicator? abstain even from thy lawful bed. Hast thou wronged any one in words, as well as deeds? bless hereafter even those that curse thee; do good to those who reproachfully use thee. Such revenge as this is very necessary; for a wounded man, (as he adds,) must not only pull the dart out of his body, but apply also suitable remedies to his wound. Hast thou therefore flowed in luxury and in drunkenness? make a compensation for it by fasting and abstinence. Hast thou cast impure eyes upon another's beauty?

cover thine eyes, and hang down thy head; being touched with a greater caution, by the harm thou hast received."

And thus Tertullian,<sup>4</sup> long before him, gives this brief admonition; "if thy neighbour ask thee, why thou defraudest thyself of thy food, and art so afflicted, tell him, I have offended God, I am in danger to perish eternally: and therefore now I hang down my head for shame, I macerate and excruciate myself; that God, whom I have injured by my sins, may be reconciled to me."

Gregory the Great, though much later than either of them, hath left this excellent gloss upon the words before mentioned. "You must observe that the friend of the bridegroom (he means John Baptist) calls not only for fruits of repentance, but for fruits *meet*, or worthy and becoming repentance. It being one thing to bring forth fruit; another to bring forth *meet* or worthy fruit. For you must know, that he who hath not committed

<sup>4</sup> L. de Pœnit. c. xi.

unlawful things, may justly use those which are lawful: but he that hath done unlawful things, for instance hath fallen into the guilt of fornication, or which is worse, of adultery, he ought to deny himself even those that are lawful; in proportion to the unlawful, which he remembers he hath given himself the liberty to enjoy. For there ought not to be equal fruits of repentance from those who have offended little, and from those who have offended much; (from those who since they have been devoted to God have led a regular life, and from those who have been very extravagant) but every one, according as he hath broken his vow to God, less or more; with more or less expressions of grief and sorrow he ought to address himself to God for mercy."

I will add only the words of St. Ambrose to a corrupted virgin. "According to the weight of the guilt, must be the greatness of the repentance: and therefore thou must not repent in word only, but in deeds. Which may be thus done: if thou settest before thine eyes from what a great dignity thou art

fallen, from what a book of life thy name is blotted out: and so believest thyself to be just next door to utter darkness, where there is endless weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. When thou hast represented this to thyself by faith, then (since the soul that sins is liable to be cast into hell fire, and there is no remedy, after baptism, but only the comfort of repentance) be content to endure any affliction, any labour, any sordid usage of thyself; if thou mayest but be delivered from eternal pains: and, if thou wilt be guided by me, be thou thyself the more cruel judge of thy own fact. If the sinner (as it follows a little after) would not spare himself, God would spare him. If he would put himself to short pain here in this life, he might escape eternal pain in the future. A great wound must be searched into carefully, and have a long cure. A great sin must necessarily have a great satisfaction."

So he calls those acts of faithful penitents, confession, weeping, mourning, neglect of their bodily culture, prayers, fastings, alms,



lying on the ground, wearing sackcloth, and such like things as were then in use; by the name of satisfaction. Not because he thought they could properly make a compensation to God for their past crimes, and merit His pardon: but because they were pleasing and acceptable to Him, when they were true significations of the inward compunction of their hearts; as well as gave satisfaction to the Church, which enjoined these penances, to take off the scandal that had been cast upon Religion by their sins. For he satisfies another, that doth what he requires of him. Now God Himself requires this of a sinner, that he be afflicted and mourn, and weep, and have his laughter turned into mourning, and his joy into heaviness.

And if He had not required it; yet nature itself presses us to it, when we are rightly affected towards him. For it is scarce possible, as Mr. Calvin well observes,<sup>5</sup> that a soul struck with the dread of the divine judgment,

<sup>5</sup> L. iii. Instit. cap. 3. sect. 15.

should not exact this of itself: and teach a man to prevent the vengeance of God, by being himself the avenger of his own sins. And the severer, saith he, we are to ourselves, and the sharper censure we pass upon our sins; the more propitious and merciful we may hope God will be unto us.

Which he seems to have borrowed from Tertullian,<sup>6</sup> in his book of Repentance; where he hath these known words. "When repentance throws a man on the ground, it supports and relieves him. When it makes him all squalid, it renders him the more pure and clean. It excuses, when it accuses him. It absolves, when it condemns. And the less thou sparest thyself, believe me, the more will God spare thee."

Which is agreeable to the doctrine of St. Paul, that, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord.<sup>7</sup> It is certain, that the judgment, which he would have had the Corinthians prevent, by judging

<sup>6</sup> Cap. ix. & x.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinth. xi. 31.

themselves, was the sharp chastisements which God inflicted upon that Church, by sickness, weakness and death; as we read in the verse foregoing. In a few words, it was His inflicting punishments upon them for their sins: and therefore it is most reasonable to think that this is the judgment He would have them pass upon themselves; which might, as I said, have prevented that judgment of God, and still might remove it. They should have afflicted and chastised themselves in a contrite manner, with fastings and mournings, and bewailing of their sins, and other humiliations: that so there might have been no need of God's inflicting punishments upon them for their reformation, which they had already begun to inflict on themselves. For if by being judged in the latter part of the verse, be meant being punished (which is unquestioned) it seems the most agreeable interpretation of judging ourselves in the former part, if we understand thereby punishing ourselves by that severe discipline, which I am treating of.

It is true indeed (for I will dissemble nothing that I know, nor strain any passage of Scripture to justify this doctrine) that the word we render judge in the beginning of the verse, is not the very same with that which is in like manner so rendered by us in the conclusion: but in the Greek there is some difference, when he saith, if we would judge ourselves (which is εἰ διακρίνομεν) from the other, we should not be judged, which is ἐκ ἄν ἐκρινόμεθα. And it is further true, that St. Chrysostom and Æcumenius there expressly note, that the Apostle doth not say εἰ ἐκολάζομεν, if we would punish ourselves, but only if we would sentence and condemn ourselves as sinners: which they take to be the import of the word διακρίνειν.

But this notwithstanding, I cannot think the infliction of such punishments upon themselves, as are the subject of this discourse (which are of a different kind from those inflicted by God, and so expressed by a different word) are here excluded. For to what do men sentence and condemn themselves (which

St. Chrysostom makes the meaning of the word) but to suffer all that a just judge shall inflict, if he deal with them according to their deserts? and how could they think of inflicting less chastisements upon themselves, than such humiliations, as were then in use; whereby they acknowledged themselves to be unworthy to live?

In which, saith the Apostle, if they had not favoured themselves, but pronounced and executed that sentence which their sins justly deserved; they might have been spared by God: and not punished, as some were, by those sicknesses and infirmities, nay, death, which He sent among them.

So that the full import of that word *judge ourselves*, I conceive to be this. If you had strictly examined yourselves, and made an exact difference (so the word is expounded verse 29) between yourselves, and those who had no sense of their irreverent behaviour towards our Lord; if you had acknowledged your errors, and condemned yourselves for them, and deprecated his displeasure by due

humiliations, and studied amendment; He would not have handled you in this manner, by sending a terrible plague upon you. For it cannot reasonably be denied, that in this judging or condemning themselves (translate it how you please) all things are contained, which were or ought to have been, the effects and fruits thereof: as in confession of sin, the Scripture includes repentance, and the fruits of repentance, or amendment of life: and in the Exomologesis of the ancient Christians, the whole business of penance was contained; as appears sufficiently, by the story I related of the Deacon's wife in Asia. Now such humiliations as I have treated of, were the effects of their condemning themselves; when they were deeply guilty, and as deeply sensible of their guilt. Which the Corinthians were not; and so did not sue out their pardon, in such a humble and afflicted manner, as became such gross offenders: for if they had, they should not have fallen under such a severe discipline of Heaven, as to have been cut off (which the Jews say was

always by the hand of Heaven) from the land of the living.

In plainer terms (which I take to be the truest interpretation of all) if the Church had judged, condemned and exercised its censures, as it ought to have done upon such offenders, and punished them for their faults: those punishments from the hand of God might have been spared.

And that is the cause still, perhaps, why many public judgments of God fall upon us in these days; because the Church is negligent in calling offenders to an account: and they will not judge, that is afflict, themselves for their offences. There are great numbers, I doubt not, who condemn their sins in their own consciences; and condemn themselves also for them, to deserve punishment from God: and this they imagine to be sufficient, to make them capable of His mercy and forgiveness. Whereas they ought to humble themselves with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; with neglect of their bodies, confession of their guilt, confusion of face, la-

mentable deprecations of God's displeasure, prayers and supplications, with works of mercy: which ought always to accompany fasting and prayer; as most becoming those who ask mercy of God, and as a revenge upon themselves for their covetousness and too great love of this present world. And, because grievous sinners do not thus afflict themselves, with an unfeigned resolution of amendment, God Himself is pleased to afflict them; by sending His plagues upon them, in one sort or other, to punish them.





## CHAPTER VII.

SOME CAUTIONS TO PREVENT MISUNDERSTANDING  
IN THIS MATTER.

THUS having proved what I undertook, that we ought not to content ourselves with inward sorrow alone, without all outward humiliations; and shown the use they have in Religion: I proceed now, according to the method laid down in the beginning, to give some *cautions*, to prevent the misunderstanding, or abuse of this doctrine.

1. And first of all I would not be understood, as if I thought they were of such an indispensable necessity that it is impossible for any sinner to obtain remission and absolution without them. No, the very history of the Gospel shows the contrary: in which we find our Saviour, who came to call sinners to repentance, forgave several persons; who did

not, like that woman, “kiss his very feet, wash them with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head.”<sup>8</sup> All which were acts of great humiliation; especially the last: wherein she employed that to the meanest use, which had been before her principal ornament and her pride.

My meaning therefore is, that these things are very useful (as hath been shown) and in some cases necessary: when penitents have been very licentious livers; and it is not likely they will otherwise be sufficiently sensible of what they have done, and of what they have deserved; nor be so humbled, as to be reclaimed and brought off from their evil courses.

2. They therefore who have constantly led a regular life, and are guilty only of the smaller sort of offences, must not take these things as spoken to them (unless it be on some occasions, which shall be presently mentioned) which are intended for gross and

<sup>8</sup> St. Luke, vii. 38.

scandalous sinners. Such as that woman now named, who was a known harlot: unto whom our Lord forgave a great deal; when little was forgiven unto Simon, who did none of these things.<sup>9</sup>

3. Yet it may be very necessary even for those to take this course, who are not such heinous offenders; in case of frequent relapses into the same sin: which must be cured by using themselves something severely. For, though, seldom slips (of the tongue suppose) may be easily corrected: yet frequent returns to folly, and that after solemn resolutions to the contrary, will require more pains and great humiliations; as a means not only to give a stop to them, but to extirpate such roots of bitterness.

4. The best also ought to afflict themselves, in times of public calamity; and upon days of solemn humiliation: when men are naturally disposed to that which may signify their seriousness, sobriety, sorrow, and un-

<sup>9</sup> St. Luke, vii. 46, 47.

worthiness of the blessings they come to beg of the Father of mercies.

5. By which every one may understand that these humiliations are not always in season; as inward grief and sorrow is: but upon such occasions as I have mentioned; and also at certain appointed times, which the Church hath fixed, either weekly, or yearly, for humiliation in general for our own and other men's sins; or for the bewailing those in particular who have deserved the censures of the Church, when they are executed on them. Of which more hereafter.

6. At all which times care must be taken, that these humiliations be *true* significations of our *inward* grief, and proceed from thence: and not merely external shews, used for fashion's sake, and to comply with the season. For without inward grief, and resolutions to be better, they are so far from procuring any favour from God, that we may justly fear they further incense Him; as being but a kind of mockery of Him. Which made the prophet Joel, in the place above named,

bid the Israelites rend their hearts, and not their garments: not intending hereby to forbid the rending their garments (which he had in effect called for, in the preceding words) but requiring them not to content themselves with that alone. Because that was but a signification and token; and a sign, where there was nothing really signified thereby, could be nothing worth, but rather an abomination in the sight of God; who counts it a vile piece of hypocrisy, when we present Him with significations, which in truth signify nothing; there being nothing within, like to that which appears without.

7. And further, this caution must be used, that by these exercises, we neither destroy the health of our bodies, nor suffer any ill affection to be bred in our minds. We ought not to make ourselves sick with fasting; nor so weaken ourselves by hard usage, as to become unfit for our employments. And greater care ought to be taken, that we do not grow morose and sour, peevish and untoward, unto others, while we are severe unto ourselves.

And that the keeping ourselves under a strict discipline, do not beget a secret pride in us; which makes us to think very highly of ourselves, and to contemn and despise others; just as the conceited Pharisee did the poor Publican.<sup>1</sup>

But above all, we must be watchful that such pride doth not creep herewith into our hearts, as tempts men to fancy they have by this discipline, highly merited at the hands of God, whom they had grievously offended.

Let such rocks as these be avoided; and then these bodily exercises, in their season and due measure, may prove very profitable: being designed for such other ends and uses as I have named; particularly, as a means to prevent our relapsing into such sins, as have cost us much affliction and trouble.

8. But lastly, I desire it may be noted, that I do not pretend any obligation or fitness either, for the use of all and every, the very same tokens of inward grief, and of the sense we

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

have of our vileness, whereby it was expressed in ancient days: but we are rather to declare the same thing, by other signs which are more suitable to our own times.

For the reason, I have shown, why they sat down in sackcloth and ashes when they humbled themselves before God, in the days of old; was, because then it was the custom of mourners, in that manner to express the sense they had of the loss, which they bewailed. But now that custom is quite antiquated; at least, in these parts of the world there are no such things used by those that lament any worldly loss: and therefore we are no more bound to wear sackcloth on our bodies, and throw ashes on our heads, when we humble ourselves, and mourn for our sins, than we are to rend our garments; which is not used in those Churches, where the other is still thought fit to be retained. But we are, as I said, to express the same things, by other signs and tokens: which are more proper to the age and the place wherein we live.

Now they that mourn (for a near relation, or friend suppose) in these Countries, are still wont to forbear their meat, to abstain from all manner of pleasures, to neglect the care and culture of their bodies, to retire themselves from company, to lay aside business, to shut up themselves in private, to cover their faces, to keep silence, to bewail their loss, and to refuse presently to be comforted. And thus it will become those who have highly offended God, to bemoan and lament themselves after the self-same manner; when they are in good earnest grieved for their sins.

As for whipping and lacerating the body, I do not find that it was ever used in the Church anciently, either under the Old Testament or the New: but there are plain indications rather, that they looked upon it as a Paganish custom, which they were not to imitate. And indeed it represents God under a vile notion, as if he delighted in our blood, and was in love with cruelty: nor is there any thing like it to be found, in the penances anciently enjoined in the Christian Church;



and therefore it is not to be approved. But such expressions of grief and sorrow are only to be used, as nature and the custom of the country direct us unto, in other cases of distress and sadness.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE USE WHICH WICKED MEN OUGHT TO MAKE OF  
THIS DOCTRINE.

**B**Y what hath been briefly said in this argument, all wicked men, who have highly provoked God by their lewd way of living, may see (if they please to open their eyes) into what a woful condition they have brought themselves: being unworthy to eat, or drink, to lift up their eyes unto heaven, to enjoy the light of the sun, or any of the least of those common blessings which God bestows upon all creatures; as sincere penitents have been constrained to acknowledge, by their deep humiliations, dejections and abasement of themselves, even to the earth before His offended Majesty.

So evil and bitter a thing it is to depart from God, and to cast His holy laws behind

our backs (with neglect, if not contempt) in the opinion of all those, who have been awakened to a lively sense of Him, and of the duty which is owing to Him. And whensoever they that now make a mock at sin, shall become so serious as to reflect upon their ways, and consider solemnly how they have opposed God, and set themselves against His authority, it will strike them with the like consternation and amazement: and they will not think fit, so much as to look up unto Him whom they have so insolently affronted, without tears in their eyes, and with a most sad and sorrowful countenance.

Nay, the most dejected looks are best becoming great offenders; and the most doleful lamentations ought to come out of their mouths; if silence, confusion, astonishment, laying their hands on their mouths, or putting their mouths in the dust, be not much more beseeeming, when they remember, that they deserve to be thrust down into utter darkness, there to bewail their mad contempt of God in extreme horror and anguish of spirit.

And this is but the first step neither, to the recovery of God's favour; unto which they should be glad upon any terms to be restored: and have just reason to look upon it as a bad sign, if they expect to recover it, upon easier conditions than these. They have too slight thoughts of their mis-doings, who look upon this injunction as too harsh and severe: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> For if men's hearts be rightly affected, they will not only readily accord to this; but think they are very kindly used, if they be after all received to mercy.

Nay, every honest heart will judge it reasonable that his sorrowful humiliations should bear some proportion to the offences, of which he stands guilty. The more he hath provoked God's displeasure, the more he will be displeased at himself: his afflictions will be the heavier; his sorrow the deeper and sad-

der; his loathing of himself the more vehement, as a very abominable creature; and consequently he will lay himself the lower, and be the more abased, when he comes to sue for pardon.

There is nothing stranger than the carelessness of men about their souls, in this regard; as St. Chrysostom excellently discourses, in the beginning of his Comments upon the Epistle to the Corinthians. “You shall see many,” saith he, “bathe themselves in tears, and refuse to be comforted, for a great many days, (his phrase is a thousand days) because they have lost some dear friend, a child, or some other relation, whom God hath taken out of the world. But though they lose their precious souls every day, they scarce ever lay it to heart: but slightly pass it over with a few sighs, at the best. Nay, where shall we find the man, that is so much as sorry for what he hath done? who is there that groans, that smites his breast, that is full of solicitude, and care, and fear, lest he be undone? Οὐδέναι ἑγὼ γὰρ οἶμαι. I think there is

none: I am not acquainted with them; they are not to be met withal, who are concerned about their souls; though they perish with a remedy just at hand.

But what a wretchlessness is this? How dost thou think to be reconciled to God, when thou art not so much as sensible that thou hast offended?

Thou wilt say; but I do confess my sins; I condemn myself for them. True, thou sayest so with thy mouth; but let thy heart tell me so. Sigh deeply at that word: sigh so sadly, that thou mayest ever hereafter be of good cheer. For if we did worthily grieve for our sins, if we sighed heartily for our offences; nothing else would make us sad: but this one trouble would drive away all other sadness." Thus he.

And then we may be bold to think we have worthily lamented our sins, and bewailed our wretched estate; when the affliction it hath given us, makes us more fearful to offend hereafter. If we can find in our hearts, so much as to play with the occasions of those

sins, which we have lamented : if we gaze with some pleasure upon the bait which intices us to them ; if we love our old wicked company ; or be so bold as to venture into it ; if we draw as near a sin as we dare : it is a sign we do not sufficiently abhor it, nor have been sorrowful enough for it. For that would have made us more shy, more wary, more timorous of relapsing into so dangerous an estate ; and afraid to approach near to those snares, wherein we had been entangled ; and thereby suffered such affliction, as can never be recompensed with any pleasures, but those of pleasing God in all things.

Let us not deceive ourselves then ; no not with sorrow and affliction of spirit, and the greatest humiliations before God ; if they be not attended with a change in the whole course of our life. Till sorrow hath wrought this effect, we have no reason to think that we have sorrowed after a godly sort. We lay aside the afflicting ourselves too soon, and speak comfort to our souls before they be fit for it : if our grief hath not made an absolute

divorce between us and our sins; never to come together again. For so the Apostle teaches us in that known place, "Godly sorrow worketh Repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."<sup>1</sup> Sorrow is an unprofitable thing, unless it work Repentance: and Repentance is unprofitable, if it only be a good fit, and we return again to the sins which we renounced. Let us not conclude therefore too hastily that we are penitents. Sorrow alone doth not make us so; no, nor a present change in the course of our life: but that change must continue and hold out when we come to be tried, and are placed again among our usual temptations. Of which till we have had some experience, let us be modest, not confident, in the opinion we have of our Godly sorrow: and judge rather we have not sufficiently lamented our sins, than speedily pronounce ourselves absolved from them.

It was the custom in the primitive Church, for those who were upon the point of suffering martyrdom for Christ, to write letters before they died, in the behalf of lapsed Christians,



who were in the state of penance: desiring the Bishops that they might be reconciled and received to the peace of the Church. But good Bishops would not easily consent to this, unless they saw real signs of amendment in the penitents: and they likewise earnestly desired the Martyrs not to be too easy in granting these letters, or in promising to sue for them; but to consider how solicitous their predecessors were to have such sinners truly humbled, and how cautious to observe the kind and quality of the sins, which they lamented in the state of penance. Nay, there were some Martyrs so wise as to reprove this giving of the peace of the Church, before they were so humbled as to be reformed, *Ne dum volumus ruinis importune subvenire, alias majores ruinas videamur parare* (as I find Moses and Maximus and other confessors speak most judiciously, in St. Cyprian, who himself hath an admirable discourse to the same purpose;) lest while we desire unseasonably to raise up lapsed Christians out of their ruins; we make way for their greater fall, and utterly undo them.

They took care so to heal one breach, as not to make another and more dangerous : so to cure a wound, as not to make a new one, harder to be cured : so to restore penitents, that they did not relapse into a more deplorable condition. For they saw clearly that by speaking peace to them too soon, before they were so soundly humbled and grievously afflicted, as to be heartily established in new resolutions, they became less fearful to offend ; and looked not so carefully to their ways, as they would have done, if they had suffered more for their former offences.

Let us take the same care about our own souls ; and not be too forward to conclude we have made our peace with God, though we have been never so sorrowful : when there are no credible signs that we are so afflicted for what we have done, as never to venture to do the like again. No prince will pardon upon other terms : and it is directly against all reason to think, that the Sovereign of the world will be content to lose all the obedience, which is owing from His creatures ; whom He

hath made with a sense of duty to Him. No cries, though lamentable beyond all expression, can persuade Him to this; and therefore it is foolish and presumptuous to expect it; especially since He hath declared the contrary, and told us as plainly as words can express it, that “the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men,”<sup>3</sup> and that “except we be converted and become like little children” (pliable to the will of our heavenly Father) “we cannot enter into his kingdom.”<sup>4</sup> Which our Saviour pronounces with such an earnest asseveration, as is apt to awaken our attention to what He says there, and in many other places: which is utterly inconsistent with the imagination, that it is sufficient to dispose us for His favour, if we acknowledge our errors, and be sorry for them, and bewail them, without any further alteration.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 18.<sup>4</sup> Matth. xviii. 3.

## CHAPTER IX.

WHAT USE THE BETTER SORT OUGHT TO MAKE  
OF THIS.

AND as our tears ought not to stop, till they have wrought a thorough alteration in our hearts, and in the course of our life : so, after that is wrought, there will still be occasion for them, and they must not be quite dried up. My meaning is, that they who by the grace of God have reformed their lives, and done away their former sins by an unfeigned sorrowful Repentance ; (or they who perhaps never highly offended God, but have been only guilty of smaller faults) ought not to think themselves wholly unconcerned in this doctrine, and to have no cause for being afflicted, with such mourning, weeping, and humiliations, as I have mentioned. They have great reason indeed to rejoice in the Lord always,

and to praise Him for His wonderful goodness towards them : but this is so far from shutting out all sorrow, that it is a part of that holy life, unto which they are renewed by Repentance, to be full of tender compassion towards others, and to bewail their miserable condition.

And therefore, beside some degree of sadness and sorrow, which is due for lesser offences, or for greater formerly committed, though now amended ; there are two things which are really very lamentable, and ought to be sadly laid to heart by the best of us. First, the public judgments which God at any time sends upon the place or kingdom where we live. Secondly, the obstinate wickedness of most offenders ; who notwithstanding these judgments, will not “turn unto Him that smiteth them, nor seek the Lord,”<sup>5</sup> as the Prophet’s words are.

1. When people will not judge themselves (as I have said before in the 6th chapter) and the offenders are so many, that the Church, perhaps, cannot judge, that is, punish them :

<sup>5</sup> Isa. ix. 13.

God takes the matter into his own hand, and some way or other inflicts such punishments on them, as he did upon the Corinthians. In which case, the few good that are among them, ought to lament them and weep over them; as they should have done if the censures of the Church had been denounced and executed upon them. For which there is the greater reason, because as they are members of the same body, so they are in danger to suffer with them in the same common calamity; especially, if they do not humble themselves, to deprecate God's heavy displeasure.

If we make a particular application of this to ourselves, in this nation; we are very blind if we do not see that the hand of God, as the Prophet speaks, hath been divers ways, stretched out against us; in a destroying pestilence, even then when the sword of war was also drawn, between us and our neighbours; and afterwards in a devouring fire, whereby many fair buildings, and holy places were laid in ashes: which are things that ought not to be forgotten, though, alas! they little now

affect men's minds. And therefore we have been again terrified by the great hazard the Church and kingdom was lately in; when their old enemies struggled once more to get the upper-hand, and had brought us even to the brink of the precipice: where we stood for some time trembling to think what would become of us. And though we were then mercifully delivered; yet when we consider how restless the spirit of sedition and rebellion hath been since among us, and brought us again so near the very same dreadful danger, that we were just upon the point of beholding all order and government over-turned: all serious Christians cannot but think that this is a lamentation, as the Prophet's words are, and ought to be for a lamentation.

The prevention indeed of that utter confusion, by a wonderful providence, ought to fill our hearts with joy: but the thoughts of such frequent calamities which have threatened us, ought to put us in fear, lest in conclusion they should fall upon us; if neither God's mercies, nor His judgments can amend us. The only

way to keep them off, is, for all good men and women to humble themselves, and weep in secret for these things. On which they cannot cast their eyes seriously, to take a view of them, but they will find them soliciting their tears and their sighs; and hear them call upon them to be afflicted and mourn, and to let their joy (sometimes at least) be turned into heaviness. This alone is a sad and melancholy sight, to behold the spirit of blindness and giddiness, of faction and rebellion, that hath seized on a great part of the nation: our senseless contentions and oppositions: the wide breaches and divisions, for which we can see no healing, may justly challenge, (if there were nothing else to trouble us) great thoughts, and searchings of heart.

2. Especially if we consider the other thing; not only how insensible most people are of all such matters, (which in bodily distempers is counted the worse symptom in the world) but how few have been amended by the public judgments which have either threatened us, or fallen upon us. The complaint



which God makes by the Prophet may still be continued, "In vain have I smitten your children, they received no correction:"<sup>6</sup> and which the Prophet makes to God, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return."<sup>7</sup> For which stubborn impiety, and impudent wickedness (which hath every where too much abounded among us) every good man ought to be very much afflicted: and not only content himself with this, that he doth not follow them in their ungodly practices; but "bewail also as many as have sinned, and have not repented" (as the Apostle speaks,) "of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness" (and other abominable sins) "which they have committed."<sup>8</sup>

For this is really the saddest spectacle of all other, to behold such numbers as have not been at all touched with any remorse for their

6 Jer. ii. 30.

7 Jer. ii. 3.

8 2 Cor. xii. 21.

own sins ; nor any grief for public calamities ; nor any fear of future danger. But have taken their pleasures to the full, in the most sorrowful times, that this nation hath seen ; and would not abate of their mirth and laughter in the least, when all things looked cloudily about them ; but encouraged one another to think of eating and drinking, and rising up to play : which all sober men cannot but look upon, to be as unseemly a sight, as if men should go and dance about their parents, or nearest relations, when they saw them a dying.

The ancient Pythagoræans were wont when any person forsook their school, to set a coffin in the place, where he used to sit : and then to make a solemn funeral for him ; bewailing him with their tears, as one that was really dead. And we have not well learned Christ, as the Apostle speaks, if we do not think we have greater reason to bewail those, who have so far forsaken God, and their holy religion, that nothing He can say or do, will move them to a sober sadness : but they go on with a stiff neck and an hard heart to laugh at all goodness.

They are in so deplorable a condition, that we may give them up for dead; and take up a lamentation over them, as lost men, who will never have any feeling: and therefore are the greatest objects of all good men's pity. Who have reason to mourn for them, and follow them with their tears; as they would a friend that is carried to his grave: or rather, they are more to be lamented, because they are dead even while they live. According to that of the son of Sirach, "seven days do men mourn for the dead: but for a fool, and for an ungodly man, all the days of his life."<sup>9</sup>

And if we take into our consideration the causes of that bold confidence, which hath made them mock at all seriousness, even when we have been in the greatest dangers; we shall see still the greater reason for our humiliations. They may be resolved into these two: first, their obstinate unbelief; which makes them condemn all that is told them of future danger. And secondly, their pride and scornfulness,

which makes them despise even God's present chastisements.

As for the first of these, it is too notorious, that many men have hardened their hearts against the belief of the judgment to come, in the other world. Which dull infidelity leads them into all manner of licentious living; and lets their furious desires loose, to run without any check or bridle into the foulest profaneness. And when they are deeply drenched in the pleasures of sense, they scarce believe any thing they do not see: but give as little credit to other histories, as they do to the records in the book of God. Or at best, they pish at them; and persuade themselves that their case is so much different from those nations, who have been ruined by such sins as they commit; that they need not affright themselves with their sad examples.

There is a strange relation, commonly observed in the Roman story, of the Equus Sejanus, a famous horse, which belonged to a gentleman of Rome called Segus. Which was highly admired by every body for his goodly

shape, fine colour, and delicate pace: but so unfortunate, that he never had any master, who was not undone. His first owner, Segus, lost his head: the next, Dolabella, perished in a battle: Cassius, the next, made away himself at Philippi: and Anthony, his last master, died after a most infamous manner. There was none of these, who had seen the fall of his predecessor, but mounted his back with a persuasion, that he should have better luck, than the person that went before him. The beautiful shape of the beast more tempted them, than the ill fortune of his masters (which in those days was wont to be superstitiously observed) could deter them. And thus truly it is now; though there be a great many instances of particular persons, and whole nations, that have been utterly undone, by such riotous and profane courses as great numbers violently prosecute; though they read of the fall of sundry flourishing empires, by reason of their luxury and excess, injustice and impiety; yet it moves them not at all to forsake their evil ways; in which they hope to be more prosperous.

Tell them of the Babylonians, of the Persians, of the Greeks and Romans, (not to say what the holy story relates of the Jews, and of many famous Christian Churches) the pleasures of sin are more alluring, than all the dismal examples affrighting to their hearts.

And though they have seen several breaches made upon their worldly happiness; though sundry calamities have invaded the nation wherein they live, enough to strike terror into considering minds; yet the wicked by reason of the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. Which was the second thing I noted; the evils which they see and feel do not much move them; because they think it is a sign of a poor and mean spirit to be daunted. They look upon it as a sneaking thing to mourn, and to be afflicted, to humble themselves (though only with the external signs of it) and imagine that nothing becomes men of quality, but to be merry and joyful.

We read in the history of the East Indies, that among other Pagans in those parts, there

are some called Rasboutes:<sup>1</sup> who have such perverse opinions concerning honour, that they think it a baseness in them (who never shun any danger) so much as to stir out of an house, when it is on fire. Nay, that some of them if they come to a pit or a precipice, which the beast under them would avoid, are wont to spur him on, and leap down into their certain destruction: imagining that by such inconsiderate, and more than brutish actions, they acquire the reputation of an heroical courage. And such senseless resolution many seem to be possessed withal among ourselves. For none of God's judgments which encounter them, can make them turn out of their way, or alter a jot the course of their life. But they think it a generous thing not to be startled at them: they esteem it unmanly to humble themselves; though it be before the Almighty. They have the courage to march on, not to say into hell fire, in the bottomless pit (for those they take for fables, which signify nothing to them) but into that which of all other things one would

1 Mandelso's Travels, p. 73.

think they should most tenderly avoid ; the ruin of their honour, and their credit, and their estates, nay, and of their health, and their dear life itself.

For these men we ought to mourn ; because we know not what else to do for them. They are too stubborn to be counselled. They are like men in a frenzy ; that are angry with those who would take the knife from them, wherewith they are going to cut their own throats. They will not endure a check, or reproof ; no, nor so much as good advice. And therefore are the more to be bewailed by all good men ; who ought to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep on their behalf, seeing they have no compassion on themselves.

And if these senseless sinners could by any means be so far awakened out of their lethargy, as to think seriously : though they regarded nothing the example of former times, or any thing of that nature : yet these two things might a little startle them, could they be persuaded to reflect now and then upon them.

First, that they are mortal ; and it will not be long perhaps before they be summoned to



their graves: and *then* it is not likely they will have the very same thoughts about them, which *they now* have. The sight of Death will bring down their proud stomachs, and humble them a little; when they see they are dust and ashes. It may make them think also, what a comfort it would then be, to believe that something in them shall still live; if they could but hope withal to have the eternal God for their friend: Whom though now they forget, yet it is possible they may then remember.

Would to God they could be prevailed withal to place themselves now in the same posture, wherein they shall be upon their death bed: and see what effect it would have upon their heart. It becomes men that pretend unto wit, to look before them: and to take care not to be surprised with passions, they never thought of; and such also as will mightily daunt them, unless their spirits be quite benumbed.

But if they will not be at this pains, let them at least cast their eyes upon those, whom

they themselves have known sadly to bemoan and bewail their miserable condition, when they came to die. That is the other thing, which it is possible may do them some good; for then it is frequent with them, to condemn all their wicked courses; and to wish for a little time to reconcile themselves to Him whom they have highly offended. Then they find Solomon a wiser man than they imagined; who thus forewarns one of these lewd livers, to take up in time (as we speak) "lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body is consumed; and say, 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."<sup>2</sup>

Now how much better, how much more becoming men of parts, is it thus to bewail themselves in good time; before they have wasted themselves in wickedness? And so, to love instruction; to thank those that reprove

<sup>2</sup> Prov. v. 11, 12.

them; to obey their teachers; to incline their ears to their godly admonitions; to endeavour to do as much good, as they have done evil: and that in the midst of the people; openly giving glory to God by their public Repentance, Whom they have boldly dishonoured by their scandalous wickedness.

This might avail them, and prove acceptable unto His offended Majesty; but to bewail themselves thus, only at the last gasp, or when they can no longer act their wickedness, no body can tell how it will be taken: but they have just reason to fear, lest the same measure be dealt to them, with which Solomon saith some shall be served. Whose dreadful doom is recorded, in the first chapter of his wise instructions, in these remarkable words, "Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man hath 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 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; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”<sup>3</sup>

From which terrible sentence, God, of His infinite mercy, deliver us. And let all that read these things, endeavour to deliver themselves, by hearkening to such good counsel, as hath been here given: that is, by turning to the Lord, with all their heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs i. 24, 32.





Part Second.

## CONCERNING FASTING.

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### CHAPTER X.

WHAT IS MEANT BY FASTING.

**A**MONG those humiliations, wherewith penitent sinners ought to prostrate themselves before God to sue for mercy, the reader cannot but observe that Fasting hath been frequently mentioned, as holding a principal place. And therefore I think it useful to treat a little of it by itself: the Church having set apart certain times for it; wherein if those wicked men I now spoke of, will not humble themselves and repent of their evil doings,

whereby they are pulling down judgments upon themselves and upon others; yet all good men should embrace the opportunities of casting down themselves frequently before God, to join with God's Ministers in those supplications, (like them prescribed in the Prophet Joel, upon their solemn fast, "Spare us, good Lord, spare Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever:"<sup>4</sup>) beseeching Him to deliver us, as from all blindness of heart, so more especially, from all sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion; from all false doctrine, heresy and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of His word and commandment. Which solemn prayers were never more necessary than in these days; and for that reason Fasting ought not to be neglected, but attend upon them, as an help unto them, and a means to make them more effectual. This shall be proved, when I have first shown, what Fasting is.

<sup>4</sup> Joel ii. 17.

And in proper speaking, Fasting is an abstinence from all manner of food ; whether it be meat or drink. As we may be satisfied (if it need any proof) from that question which was asked our Saviour, “Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink ?”<sup>5</sup> Which place is remarkable for two things ; for it shows both that prayers were a concomitant of Fasting, as I said just now ; and that Fasting is so opposite to eating and drinking, that he who eats and drinks doth not Fast. Which is still more confirmed by the words wherein the other Evangelists put this question, which are these ; “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not ?”<sup>6</sup> Here they call that not Fasting, which St. Luke calls eating and drinking : it being one and the same thing, to eat and drink and not to Fast. Nor is any other notion to be found of Fasting in the holy Scriptures, or in any ancient writer,

<sup>5</sup> Luke v. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Mark ii. 18. Matth. ix. 14.

Jewish or Christian, but this: forbearance of all manner of meat and drink, while the Fast lasts.

Some think indeed, that, speaking improperly, there are examples in Scripture of Fasts, which consisted only in abstinence from the better sort of food, and contenting themselves with harder fare. Thus Josephus saith, that the fast which Esther and her maidens observed together with the Jews in Shushan, when they “neither eat nor drink for three days, night nor day;”<sup>7</sup> was forbearing all delicate meat and drink for that time; as Grotius<sup>8</sup> observes. Which may receive some confirmation from what Daniel saith of himself, “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks, I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself, at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”<sup>9</sup> His mourning (which comprehends Fasting) was nothing else, it should seem, but abstinence from all things pleasant and desirable (as the word is in the Hebrew

<sup>7</sup> Esth. iv. 16.    <sup>8</sup> Grot. Annot. in Vet. Test. p. 200.    <sup>9</sup> Esth. x. 2, 3.



language) while he allowed himself a coarser sort of diet, which nothing but mere necessity commended to his appetite.

And if we let this pass for truth, it doth not prejudice what I said of Fasting; that usually, and speaking exactly, it signifies, eating and drinking nothing at all: and if the holy writers speak otherwise, it is upon some extraordinary occasion, when the humiliation continued so long, that it was impossible to fast strictly, without any refection at all: as it was in these fasts, of three days, and three weeks. But I am not satisfied that Daniel's mourning was such as hath been now supposed; for his words may signify no more, but that when he did eat and drink, nothing that was pleasant came into his mouth: and then his meaning is, that for three weeks he kept a fast, eating and drinking nothing at all till the evening (as the manner was on fasting days) and then abstaining from flesh and wine, and using only a coarser sort of bread. For thus Ezra fasted, eating "no bread at all, nor drinking water: for he mourned because of the transgression of

them that had been carried away,"<sup>9</sup> just as Daniel did. The fast of Esther indeed doth not so easily admit this interpretation ; because they did in that neither eat nor drink three days, night or day : but if we take the words rigidly, they will not admit of Josephus's interpretation, no more than of this ; for they that fare hardly, do notwithstanding eat and drink. And therefore I am apt to think the true meaning is, that they made no set meal at all, neither night nor day : but if any of them was forced to taste any thing, for the support of nature (which might otherwise have failed in some constitutions) it was privately, and of the meanest sort of food. Or, according to the usual manner of fasts, they ate and drank nothing at all, neither in the day, nor in the night, for three whole days and nights together ; save only in the evening : and then also they forbore all manner of delicate food.

The sum of what need be said in this matter is, that a complete and perfect fast consists in total abstinence from all meat and drink

until the evening: and then also in eating and drinking sparingly, and that of the meaner sort of food. An imperfect and partial fast, consists in abstinence from some kind of food, which we most love; or in feeding sparingly of any kind, and denying our appetite that full satisfaction which it desires, at the usual times of repast.

They that cannot endure the first of these, may yet easily bear the last; and therein perform something of this duty of Fasting: if their abstinence either in the quality or quantity of meat and drink, do in some measure afflict them, while in some measure it also refreshes them. For no abstinence can partake in the least of the nature of fasting; if there be not something in it that afflicts us: which I shall show hereafter, is the very thing designed in Fasting.

And thus perhaps we are to understand our Church, in that part of its Tables and Rules, which are set down before the Common-prayers, concerning days of Fasting, or Abstinence. The particle *or* may either signify

Abstinence to be another name for Fasting: or it may distinguish abstinence from fasting, as a lesser thing. If we follow the latter sense, then the intention of the Church is, that upon all those days there named, they that are able should Fast; that is wholly forbear all food till the evening: and they who are not able to do this, yet should abstain from all delicate food, and feed abstemiously; so that while they give nature some support, they also afflict and humble it. In short, they that cannot wholly abstain on those days, yet should abstain from set meals, and take privately some slender refreshment.



## CHAPTER XI.

OF THE OBLIGATION WE HAVE TO FAST.

THERE being no positive precept left by our Blessed Saviour about Fasting, some have thence concluded it is a matter of liberty, and not of necessity: that is, we may use it if we please, but are not tied to the practice of it. But before they had made this conclusion, they should have considered, that there is no such precept neither, for prayer to God: but only directions how to pray; as there are also how to order ourselves when we fast. And therefore the proper inference from that observation (of there being no positive precept for fasting) should have been this; that there was no need of any precept to enjoin this duty; it being no less known and practised by all good men than prayer to God, and giving of alms: with which it is joined in our Saviour's famous

sermon on the mount.<sup>1</sup> In which sermon our Lord, instructing his disciples about the principal duties of a Christian life, it is not to be thought that he would have mentioned this, unless he intended it should be one part of our Christian duty. Which being not in downright terms commanded, as some others are, but only supposed; it is so much the more to be regarded: as a duty unto which there is an antecedent obligation; so plain and so commonly owned, that he needed to do no more but only teach them, to what they should have respect in the performance of it. Adding moreover, that so performed as He directed, it would be accepted with God, and openly rewarded by Him. Which is a further confirmation that it is a Christian duty; because there is the very same promise made to the regular practice of it, that there is to giving alms, and to prayer.

Which as they are natural duties, which men learnt without any institution; so I take Fasting to be also: all mankind being inclined

<sup>1</sup> St. Matth. vi. 1, 2, 3, 16, 17.

to abstain from meat and drink, when they are in great grief and sorrow; and when they have any serious business, to which they would apply their minds; such as meditation, especially, and solemn prayer. And therefore all nations, from ancient times, have used Fasting, as a part of Repentance; and as a means to turn away God's anger: as we may gather from the Ninevites, who proclaimed a Fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least; hoping God would turn from His fierce anger denounced against them, if they turned every man from his evil way; for which, by these humiliations, they professed themselves heartily sorry.<sup>2</sup> Which was not a notion peculiar to them, but to all the world, I could without much labour show; if this little book were not designed for other purposes. Those words of our Saviour may suffice to show us the inclinations of other countries, as well as of the Jews.<sup>3</sup> Where he saith if Tyre and Sidon had enjoyed such means of being good, as Chorazin and Beth-

<sup>2</sup> Jon. iii. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 22.

saida had, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes: that is, humbled themselves with Fasting, after the example of the Ninevites; for on such solemn occasions they put on sackcloth and threw ashes on their heads; which usually accompanied Fasting, as Fasting did prayer to God for mercy.

And for this cause John Baptist's disciples we read in the gospel fasted oft, he baptizing them (as St. Paul speaks,<sup>4</sup>) with the baptism of Repentance: that he might prepare them to receive our Lord. Who was so far from reproving this practice either of their's or of the Pharisees, as a superfluous thing; that He saith His disciples hereafter should do the same. For the present indeed He did not press it upon them; but the only reason was, that it was not then in season. For Fasting is proper for mourners; but while He was with them it was a time of joy altogether, the great Jubilee<sup>5</sup> when it was as improper to fast, as to forbear to eat and drink at a wedding. This is the sense of His answer to those that ques-

4 Acts xix. 4.

5 Luke iv. 18, 19.



tioned, why His disciples fasted not at all, when those of John and of the Pharisees fasted often?<sup>6</sup> And He seems to me to mean no more, in those words which follow, "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, neither do men put new wine into old bottles," but this only: that congruity is to be observed in all things. For that is the thing He had said before; mourning (of which fasting was a part) did not suit with the bride-chamber: and the suitability of one thing to another is always to be attended; for if we mind not how they agree and sort together, we shall commit such indecencies, as are expressed by those two following comparisons.

St. Chrysostom indeed understands these comparisons (and most now follow him herein) as if our Lord had said, that His disciples being yet raw and infirm, were not able to bear the severe discipline of fasting: but might receive hurt by it, as an old garment doth by the sewing a new piece of cloth to it,

<sup>6</sup> Matth. ix. 14.

and old bottles by putting new wine into them. But, besides other objections that may be made to this, which I cannot answer, it seems unaccountable, why Christ's disciples should not be as strong as John's: and very hard, to affirm that John imposed such discipline upon his disciples, as Christ judged would be prejudicial and noxious unto His.

I rest therefore in the fore-named exposition, which agrees with the scope of our Saviour: who intended not to reject fasting, or to say His disciples were not yet fit for it; but that it was not yet fit for them. For there being to every thing a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; in which time God had made every thing beautiful, (as Solomon speaks<sup>7</sup>) now was the time of gladness (while He was present in person with them, and they were in the midst of the marriage-feast mentioned,<sup>8</sup>) in which fasting was un-beseeming: but the time of mourning was coming (when He was taken away from them, and they fell

7 Eccles. iii. 1, 2.

8 Matth. xxii. 2, 3.

into great distresses) and in those days they would fast without any bidding.

And accordingly we find they were in Fastings often, (as St. Paul speaks of himself,<sup>9</sup>) and herein, as well as all things else, approved themselves as Ministers of God,<sup>1</sup> and taught others also the frequent use hereof: which was observed so carefully in all following ages, that St. Basil boldly pronounces, Repentance without Fasting to be an idle business.<sup>2</sup>

But the practice of the Church shall be the subject of another chapter, when I have first shown in the next, of what use fasting is in religion. And I shall end this chapter with this plain proof of the truth of what hath been said: which will serve for an introduction to what follows.

If it be a duty to call ourselves to an account for our sins, to humble ourselves before God, to repent and to beg pardon for them; we may easily know what obligation we have to Fast-

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinth. xi. 27.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinth. vi. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Hom. 1. de Jejunio.

ing: and it may safely be referred to the judgment of any man of common sense, whether it become a Penitent to present himself before God, full, or fasting: and in which of these ways he thinks sorrow and grief is to be expressed; and the compassion of Him whom we have offended, most likely to be moved.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE ENDS AND USES OF RELIGIOUS FASTING.

**F**ASTING serves as a help to so many Christian duties, with which it is frequently joined, that I cannot mention them all in this little treatise. Wherein I consider it chiefly as an act of humiliation, and a part of Repentance: whereby we both abase ourselves before God, and acknowledge our unworthiness of the least of His mercies; and also afflict and punish ourselves for our former excesses and other sins: which it helps us also to cure, and is a remedy against.

That it is an act of abasement, and serves to humble and lay us low in our own thoughts, the Psalmist in so many words tells us, when he saith, "My clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with Fasting."<sup>3</sup> Nor had sack-

<sup>3</sup> Psal. xxiv. 13.

cloth, or any other part of the ancient discipline, a different meaning: for by putting on such coarse clothing (as Mr. Mede observes) they ranked themselves, with men of the meanest and lowest condition. Which was the intention also of putting ashes and sometimes earth upon their heads; as if they were below the lowest of God's creatures: and of sitting or lying upon the ground; with which, by that posture, they levelled themselves. And, it may be added, "of pouring out water before the Lord,"<sup>4</sup> which was a very ancient ceremony upon their fasting-days, in token of their humiliation, saith Rabbi Solomon upon that place: as if they had said, "Behold, O Lord, we are before thee as these waters that are poured out;" that is, nothing worth. The same they confessed, by abstaining from all sort of food; which was an acknowledgment that they were not worthy to live upon God's earth any longer. Thus when Ahab "rent his clothes" (which was another act of humiliation, making them look like beggars) "and put sackcloth

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. vii. 6.

on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly," (as a man quite dejected) God himself calls this, "Ahab's humbling himself before Him,"<sup>5</sup> and promises thereupon to remit something of the sentence pronounced against him; in not executing it so soon as was intended.

And that it is a natural effect and expression of sorrow, I need not trouble myself to demonstrate. Daniel calls it by the name of mourning. And what he calls "mourning and eating no pleasant bread,"<sup>6</sup> in the beginning of the chapter, the Angel afterward, taking special notice of it, calls "chastening himself before his God."<sup>7</sup> And so we translate the Psalmist's words, "When I wept, and chastened my soul with Fasting."<sup>8</sup> For no abstinence, or sorrow can deserve the name of penitence; but such as is afflictive: which is so much intended in fasting, that they are words of the same signification. According to that known rule among the Jews, whereso-

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 27, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Dan. x. 2, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Dan. x. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Psal. lxix. 10.

ever the Scripture speaks of afflicting the soul, it means fasting. Thus the great Fast appointed by God to be yearly observed on the seventh day of the tenth month, is described, "It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statute for ever."<sup>9</sup> "And whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted on that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."<sup>1</sup> And this was the end of all other Fasts, as appears by those words of Ezra, (which are the most express of any to this purpose.) "Then I proclaimed a fast, at the River Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before God."<sup>2</sup> For hunger and thirst is in itself troublesome and painful to the body, as St. Austin very well observes; "Nam fames et sitis dolores sunt. Urunt, et sicut febris necant, nisi alimentorum medicina succurrunt:"<sup>3</sup> and should call to our mind the true cause of all pain and anguish: that our conscience feeling the sharp stings of guilt, and we being pricked in the heart (as

<sup>9</sup> Lev. xvi. 29, 31.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxiii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra viii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. x. Confess. c: 31.



the Apostle speaks) may more thankfully embrace the remedy, and speedily also seek for relief, by an unfeigned Repentance.

Fasting hath also something of a penal chastisement in it: whereby we take revenge upon ourselves (as I have showed in the fifth chapter) and punish ourselves for the intemperance of our former life.

Which by this means we also begin to amend: it being an act of self-denial; and of no small consideration; for therein we deprive ourselves of those satisfactions, which we naturally much desire; and which we might also most lawfully enjoy. Whereby likewise, it is manifest, we inure ourselves to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" and are in a preparation to suffer for His name's sake: which was another notion the Ancients had of it.

It helps also to "keep under, or beat down our body, and to bring it into subjection,"<sup>4</sup> as St. Paul speaks. Where in these terms he relates the discipline he exercised

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinth. ix. 27.

upon himself; which Peter Martyr allows to be meant of his fasting. Whereby the "flesh being subdued to the spirit" (as it is in the Collect for the first Sunday in Lent, which excellently explains the words of St. Paul) we are disposed "ever to obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness." To which a pampered body will not let us listen, for it kicks against them and resists them : and therefore its food is to be sometimes withdrawn (as provender is from a wanton beast) that being tamed, it may become more pliable to our minds; and they may with less opposition be brought to submit, body and soul, unto the holy instructions of the Word of God. Which, by the way, St. Paul thought so necessary a piece of Christian discipline, that he was afraid of being lost and rejected by God, if it were neglected. For that was the reason why he treated his body severely "lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." And therefore they are strangely confident people, who fancy there is no need of such mortifications; no

danger from a body full fed: for which it is their only care to provide the best they can, but never to beat down. They, in effect, make themselves more spiritual than St. Paul; for whom if they had a due reverence, they would not "be high-minded but fear;" and after his example, use such abstinence, that their body grow not unruly, and thereby endanger their salvation.

Unto which, Fasting, if rightly used, contributes so much, that it serves to ends quite contrary to those of humiliation, abasement and affliction: for by bringing the body into subjection, it helps to raise our minds to heavenly thoughts; for which all men find themselves most fit, not when they are full, but when they are fasting.

And that it was anciently looked upon as a help to prayer, that is a convincing argument; that the Jews were wont upon their Sabbaths to eat and drink nothing, till the Divine service was over in the morning. By which St. Peter satisfies them, that he and the rest of the Apostles could not be thought drunk on

the day of Pentecost (as some mockers said they were, when they heard them speak various languages) since it was but the third hour of the day:<sup>5</sup> that is, nine o'clock in the morning. As much as to say, Divine service was not yet begun: and therefore they must suppose them fasting, unless contrary to their known behaviour, they would judge them to have no sense of religion. Upon which score Christians have been wont to fast, especially before the holy communion: partly out of reverence to God, who they thought ought to be served before themselves; and partly to fit them for meditation and prayer, wherein they were more easily lifted up above, when their bodies were empty, and their minds full. For they thought that prayers were fed (as Tertullian's phrase is) and nourished by Fasting: which offers unto God, as he loves to speak, the fattest sacrifice.

And as it is an help to prayer; so a means also to make it effectual: when Fasting is an act of true humiliation and repentance. Which

<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 15.

is the cause that we seldom read of fasting, but as a concomitant of prayer;<sup>6</sup> which seems to be our Saviour's meaning, when He tells His disciples, that some devils could not be cast out, "but by prayer and fasting."<sup>7</sup> That is, it was a work which required great intention of mind, in prayer to God, and a strong faith in Him, (in which they were defective,) unto which Fasting helps to raise the mind, by withdrawing it from care of the body: unto which while we deny all manner of support, we are made more sensible of our entire dependence on God alone.

To Whom it is most unseemly to sue for mercy, if we ourselves show no mercy unto others: unto which Fasting both disposes, and enables us. For it makes us sensible of the miseries of poor hungry wretches; and furnishes us with as much to give them, as we spare from ourselves. Which was one use that good people heretofore made of Fasting;

<sup>6</sup> Among other places read Ezra viii. 21, 23. Jonah v. 8, and Luke v. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Matth. xvii. 20, 21.

as we may gather from those places where alms are joined together with it and with prayer. The story of Cornelius is well known,<sup>8</sup> where he relates how an angel appeared to him on a fasting-day; testifying how acceptable the prayers and alms were, which he then offered unto God. With which agrees the history of Tobias, who when he sent away his son into Media with many good instructions, enlarges most of all upon almsgiving;<sup>9</sup> which the angel, at his return, teaches them both, is to be joined with the two forenamed duties. "Prayer is good with Fasting and alms, and righteousness;" (that is other works of mercy) "a little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness: it is better to give alms, than to lay up gold. For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin."<sup>1</sup>

Nor were the heathens utterly unacquainted with this practice of forbearing food themselves, that they might be able to help their

<sup>8</sup> Acts x. 30, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Tob. iv. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

<sup>1</sup> Tob. xii. 7, 8.

neighbours.<sup>2</sup> For when the city of Tarentum was in great distress, and in danger to perish, or to be taken by famine, they of Rhegium made a decree that they would fast every tenth day, and send that victuals to the relief of the Tarentines; who being hereby preserved, gratefully commemorated their deliverance, by instituting a festival called Fasting.

And now who sees not, in conclusion, that Fasting is every way a means to obtain favour with God, for the averting of His anger, from ourselves, or from the nation where we live? For if humiliation, if repentance and amendment of life, if earnest prayer, if acts of mercy to others, be the way to prevail with God for mercy to ourselves; then Fasting, which contributes to all these, must needs be of great efficacy for this purpose. And this, perhaps, may be the reason, why we have not found relief, when we or others were afflicted; nor have prevailed for the turning away those evils which at any time threatened us: because we did not seek what we desired in this

<sup>2</sup> Ælian Var. Hist. L. v. cap. 20.



way; but contented ourselves with prayers and some kind of repentance, without such humiliations, and chastening of ourselves as our sins and our condition required.





## CHAPTER XIII.

OF FASTING-DAYS; PARTICULARLY WEDNESDAYS AND  
FRIDAYS.

THE Church of God therefore hath always set some time apart for Fasting, as well as prayer: and thought it a duty of such continual use, that it is not safe it should be long intermitted. For mankind being subject frequently to run into sin, it is but reason they should be frequently put in mind of calling themselves to an account, and returning to Him with sorrowful humiliation for their faults. And therefore it is a most ancient and no less wholesome, ordinance of the Church, that we should, from week to week, assemble ourselves for this end: to search and try our ways, and with fasting and prayer to turn unto the Lord; that thereby we may turn away His wrath from us, which otherways either in general or particular, may fall upon us.

To except against this, because there is no Divine commandment upon record for it, is very unreasonable. For in the ancient religion of the Jews there was no precept given by their law-giver, for more fasts than one, throughout the whole year (which was that, I named before, on the great day of expiation) and yet notwithstanding they held themselves obliged to observe many other fasts, upon set days in several months: some of which are remembered in Scripture, and approved by God; though not prescribed by His particular commandment. Read Zechariah vii. 3, 5. viii. 19., where you will find that four fasts, in several months, having been upon good reason ordained, they durst not alter them (though the reason seemed to be altered) without a Divine direction: which their Elders, by whose authority they were first appointed, desired to receive from the Prophet.

But it is most to my purpose to observe, that there were also weekly (as well as those monthly) fasts among that people: which our Saviour found in use when he came; and did

not reprove; no more than prayer, and paying of tithes, which the Pharisee mentions together therewith; "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other men, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."<sup>2</sup> Which were all commendable things, if his vanity had not made him glory in them, and despise other people; and therefore the Pharisees' frequent fasting, is mentioned (I observed before) in other places of the Gospel, together with that of John's disciples, (who also fasted oft) without the least reflection upon them for it, as if they were superstitious, or did more than needed. No, our blessed Saviour rather approves of their strictness in this. For He saith His disciples should not be behind with them in fasting hereafter; though for the present, there was a special reason why they did not practise it.

<sup>1</sup> Of which speech of our Saviour I shall make considerable use presently; when I have noted that the two days on which they fasted every

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 11, 12.

week were the second and the fifth; that is our Monday and Thursday. Which days, no doubt, were chosen, because they had been of old days of prayer: which the devouter sort observed with fasting also, for such reasons as I have already named. If we may give credit to Maimonides, these days were appointed by Moses himself, for solemn assemblies, which he knew could not with safety, be long discontinued. And therefore saith he, "Our master Moses appointed Israel to read the law at morning prayer upon the Sabbath day, and upon the second and fifth; that they might not rest three days from hearing the law." Upon which days even they that dwelt in the villages (as Mr. Thorndike<sup>3</sup> further observes out of him) were bound to assemble in the Synagogues; though on the rest of the days in the week they did not tie them to it: no more than they did to fasting on those days; with which the stricter and devouter sort of people observed them; as not only the Gospel, but their own writers inform us.

<sup>3</sup> Relig. Assemblies, chap. viii.

Now these two days having been thus set apart from ancient time for prayer and fasting; those pious Jews who became Christians, could not think of being less religious and devout under the gospel, than they had been under the law: and therefore still continued to observe two such days every week, though not the very same. For as instead of the seventh (which was the Jewish Sabbath) they now kept the first day of the week as the principal time for their assemblies: so instead of the second and the fifth they chose the fourth and the sixth (which are our Wednesdays and Fridays) for the two other days on which they weekly held solemn assemblies: and for the very same reason, it is likely, for which Moses or the elders chose the other; because they were at the same convenient distance from the Lord's day, as Monday and Thursday were from the Jewish Sabbath; and hereby it was provided, that (as Maimonides speaks) no three days passed without the more solemn sort of assemblies.

Certain it is, that there was no Church in the time of Epiphanius, which did not look upon

these two days, as the stated days for fasting and prayer. Which he avows so confidently against the Aerians, that he fears not to ask this question,<sup>4</sup> “Who is there that consents not in this, throughout all the climates of the world, that the fourth day, and the day before the Sabbath (i. e. the sixth day) are Fasts determined, or appointed, in the Church ?” nobody he knew durst contradict this challenge, and undertake to shew the contrary : which is the more remarkable, because he represents them as set days, by a settled decree of Ordinance, and that, of the Apostles. For so it follows ; that it was ordained by an apostolical constitution, all should fast on those two days.

Which doth not seem to me so unlikely, as it doth to some ; when I reflect upon those words of our Lord, in answer to those that asked why the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fasted oft, but His did not ? Wherein as He no way condemns what either the one or the one or the other did (for that which was a

<sup>4</sup> Hæres. lxxv. n. 6.

virtue in John's disciples, could not be a crime in the Pharisees) so He doth not go about to excuse His disciples from the like obligation. But plainly saith, that though it was not fit for the present; yet when He was gone from them, they also should fast in those days. And I see no cause why we should not think that He means they should fast as oft (about which the question was) as the other did. Which being twice every week (of which it is very reasonable to understand the often fasting both of John's disciples and of the Pharisees) I cannot but conclude the Apostles also, when our Saviour had left the world, observed weekly two such solemn days. And so by their practice and example, at least, set apart and determined the times fore-mentioned for fasting and prayer: for why should we think of any other two days than those which the Church in future times observed every where with such uniformity; that they could find no other original of it, but the Apostolical ordinance. Thus Socrates writes in particular of the Church of Alexandria, what Epiphanius saith of the



Church in general; that it was ἐξ ἀρχαίων,<sup>5</sup> an ancient custom (or a custom from the beginning of our religion there) to meet on the fourth and sixth days of the week, for to hear the Scriptures read and expounded by the Doctors; and to do all other things belonging to an assembly, excepting the celebration of the Eucharist (which it seems was omitted there, though not in other places, on those days, as unsuitable to a fast) and that Origen taught upon those two days, a great part of what he left written, in that Church. Clemens of Alexandria also mentions these days long before him: and I do not see of what other days Cæcilius can be understood, when he objects (in Minutius Felix) to the Christians, their “solennia jejunia,” as dangerous tokens of a conspiracy among them. For it is plain by those words that they held solemn assemblies on certain days, for fasting, as well as prayer: and that they returned often, and great numbers met together, or else they could not have been held dangerous to the government.

<sup>5</sup> Hist. Eccles. L. v. c. 22.



These were the famous *station* days, so much spoken of by the ancient Christians: on which they continued longer in the Church than ordinary, the Divine offices being prolonged beyond the ordinary time; and thence they had the name of stations.

To be short, if this be allowed (which seems to be a probable truth) that the Apostles afterward, though not while our Saviour lived, fasted as oft as John's disciples and the Pharisees had done before; which was no less than twice every week: there can be no other days reasonably thought of for this purpose, than those which the Church in following ages observed. And there is the greater reason to judge this a probable truth; because the Apostles observed many pious customs of the Jews: of not eating, for instance, before morning prayer was over; as I before observed. Which may well incline a considering man to think, they likewise conformed themselves to this of fasting as often in a week as John's disciples and other strict persons had done: which was no less commendable than the usage of fasting

till the end of Divine service, on the Sabbath days, in the morning.

And then I can see no incongruity in it (but it rather accords with the practice of religious people hereto-fore) if we think these to have been the times, on which the Apostle advises husbands and wives to forbear one another's company, that they might "give themselves to fasting and prayer."<sup>6</sup> Which Peter Martyr is of opinion,<sup>7</sup> the Apostle meant concerning public fasting, and public prayer. And as the widow Anna is said to have served God many years, "with fasting and prayers night and day,"<sup>8</sup> which I think ought to be understood of the weekly fasts, which religious people then observed: so the same Peter Martyr thinks it reasonable thus to understand the Apostle, where he speaks of a widow in deed, whose description is, that "she continueth in supplications" (with fasting saith he) "and prayers night and day:"<sup>9</sup> upon those days (as I take it) which were then observed

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 5.

<sup>7</sup> In Cap. xx. Judic. p. 172.

<sup>8</sup> Luke ii. 37.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. v. 5.

in the Christian Church, answerable to those in the Jewish.

And why should we not think it was upon one of these days, that the Church met together “and ministered to the Lord, and fasted and prayed :”<sup>1</sup> for the very distresses in which the Church was, required then as frequent fasting as ever ? There is little doubt but the Fast here spoken of, was upon a solemn day of Divine service : which is sufficiently implied in those words, “as they ministered to the Lord ;” and in those that follow, “when they had prayed.” Now on the Sabbath it was utterly unlawful to fast ; and they abhorred from it : as the Christians afterwards did, from fasting on the Lord’s day. And therefore I conclude it was upon one of the weekly solemn prayer days, then in use in the Christian Church, as formerly in the Jewish. For what reason is there to question, that when any extraordinary case called for a special fast (as now the separating Barnabas and Saul for a great work did ; and as in pressing dangers

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 2, 3.

the Bishops of the Church appointed extraordinary fasts) that fast was still held upon those very days: which then they commanded to be observed with more than usual strictness.

For thus all fasts appointed among the Jews upon special occasions, were in order to fall (as Mr. Thorndike observes in the chapter before named) upon the usual days of fasting; which were every week observed in a lower degree, but upon those extraordinary occasions were observed with greater severity: and therefore it is reasonable to think the Christian fasts of the like kind, were kept on the usual days, (either Wednesday or Friday, or rather both) only with the greater solemnity. However, that place and another in the next chapter,<sup>2</sup> are plain evidences of their fasting before ordinations, or setting persons apart for a special ministry: and upon them is justly founded the fasts of the four seasons (called Ember-weeks) before orders are given in our Church; all solemn and great things being

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 23.

always undertaken by such preparations. In-  
somuch that St. Hierom in his Prologus to  
St. Matthew's gospel, saith that St. John being  
desired, by the Churches to write his gospel  
(against Ebion and Cerinthus who denied  
Christ's divine nature) told them he would do  
it, "*si ecclesia tota publice antea jejunasset,*"  
if the whole Church would first keep a public  
Fast, before he went about it. Which was  
affirmed by Eusebius in his ecclesiastical  
history.

To conclude this chapter ; all Christians  
have so generally observed some set times of  
Fasting (which was wholly rejected only by the  
Gnosticks<sup>3</sup> who condemned all fasting, nay,  
cursed it as disagreeable to their beastly life)  
that those odd people who (loving to be singular  
and cross to the customs of the Church) would  
not observe the two usual fasts on Wednes-  
days and Fridays, yet fasted on other days :  
as Marcion and his disciples on Saturdays,  
and the Aerians on the Lord's day : who  
also fasted on Wednesday ; but of their own

<sup>3</sup> Epist. Hæres. xxvi. n. 5.

accord, not in obedience to the Church's Constitutions. So Epiphanius informs us, out of whom I have all this<sup>4</sup>

And now that I mention the Saturday fast, it will be fit to take notice, that the Church of Rome now hath, and anciently had, a custom of fasting on that day. But as Epiphanius condemns this as one of Marcion's errors, that "he fasted on the Sabbath," that is Saturday : so Petavius ingenuously acknowledges (what his great learning could not but know) that it was contrary to the custom of the Eastern Church ; in which that day was a long time honoured as a festival. And he should have added, that this custom of fasting on Saturday, was so far from being universal in the Western Church, that it did not, of a long time, prevail in all the Churches of Italy. For it is commonly known that in St. Ambrose's days they did not fast at Milan upon that day ; which the mother of St. Austin wondering at when she came thither,

<sup>4</sup> Hæres. xlii. n. 3. et Hæres. lxxv. n. 3.

had this answer returned to the enquiry her son made of the reason of it, from St. Ambrose: "When I am at Rome I fast on Saturdays, because they do so there; but when I return to Milan I do not fast on that day, because they do not so here." An admirable resolution of doubts of this nature: importing that we should conform to the customs of the Church where we live, without condemning the customs of other Churches. For all were founded at first, it is likely, upon some great reason, (peculiar to that Church, wherein it differs from others;) and if St. Austin's information be right, there was a weighty cause for what they did at Rome: for he saith in his Epistle to Cassulanus, the original of the Saturday fast there was, that when St. Peter entered the lists with Simon Magus, upon a Lord's day at Rome, the Church appointed a fast the day before, which was observed there ever after. But when one Urbicus contended vehemently for the necessity of this Saturday's fast, as if there was a divine law for it, St. Austin most resolutely opposed him, and



denied any such obligation; as may be seen in his eighty-sixth Epistle.

But my intention is not to engage in any controversies, but plainly to instruct our people in their Christian duty; which is to observe the ordinances of the Church whereof they are members; which make Wednesdays and Fridays, days of solemn supplication, as anciently they were; *and all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day, to be also one of the days of Fasting or Abstinence.*





## CHAPTER XIV.

## SATISFACTION TO SOME EXCEPTIONS.

**I**T is now a shame, or should be so, to mention the stale objections of Mr. Cartwright and others, against this doctrine, which have been often baffled : that God in the fourth commandment gave men liberty to work six days, which none can restrain ; and that the Apostle condemns the Churches of Galatia, for “ observing days, and months, and times, and years.”<sup>5</sup> But since some are still so weak, as to insist upon such trivial exceptions, I shall in a few words tell the reader what he is to answer, when he meets with them.

To the first it may be replied, that the Jews to whom that precept was given, did not understand it to give them such an unbounded liberty, that none could appoint any of the

<sup>5</sup> Gal. iv. 10.

six days to be employed otherwise, than in labour. For then Esther did very ill, in commanding a three days' fast; when the exigence of their affairs required it. Nay, they who make this exception, have no such sense of that commandment (and therefore they do very ill to mention it) for they themselves set apart any day, as they please, for prayer and humiliation, or thanksgiving: and when they had power, required others so to do. Which is utterly unlawful, if the fourth commandment have any such meaning as they imagine: which must lead them at last to affirm that labour is commanded on all days but one; directly against their own frequent practice.

As for the other, there is nothing more certain, and more universally acknowledged by all Christians, than that it belongs wholly to the keeping of the Jewish solemnities: to which Christians were so far from having any obligation, that they who thought they had, (from an opinion that the Mosaical Law was still in force,) did, in that, overthrow Christianity, and go back to Judaism. This is appa-

rent from the scope of the Apostle's discourse ; as well as from the account which the ancient writers of Christianity<sup>6</sup> have given us of their sense about it ; such St. Hierom and St. Austin. The former of which, in his comments on this place, mentions the fasts and assemblies on certain days among Christians, as wisely appointed for those, who spend more time in the world than with God, and either cannot, or will not assemble with the Church every day : that on those solemn days at least, they might sequester themselves a while from secular employments, and bestow some time on the service of God.

Their exceptions are far more considerable, who say they cannot fast, without great prejudice to their health ; or without indisposing them for God's service. But they may be easily and briefly answered : for, as to those who say their health is hereby prejudiced ; if they be *certain* of it, the Church never intended to oblige *them* by its laws about fast-

<sup>6</sup> Vid. Socratis Histor. L. v. c. 22.

ing, which are designed, as all its ordinances are, for the good, not for the hurt, of all its children. But in this let them use an upright judgment, and they need trouble themselves no further; only let them consider, it will not prejudice their health to come to the Prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, (and therefore I hope they will make a conscience of *that*) and to use some abstinence also on those days, will, in all likelihood, contribute much unto their health.

As for the other, they may be soon satisfied also, that if fasting doth not promote the religious ends for which it was ordained, it must be let alone. And one great end, is prayer, as hath been said: for which if it make men unfit, by raising vapours and clouds, they must take some moderate refreshment. But this supposes still, that they will frequent the prayers, of which let them be careful, and beg of God to accept of such humiliations, as they are able to make before Him.

Some pretend that other reformed Churches have no set days of fasting (but only fast as

occasion requires) nay, some of their Divines have spoken against such days.

To which it may be replied, that Luther, the very first reformer, acknowledges two kinds of Fasts to be laudable (in a sermon of his on the Sunday next to Christmas-day;) one,—a Civil Fast appointed by the magistrate at certain times; which is a profitable and necessary ordinance, that all things be not consumed by luxury and riot: the other,—spiritual to be observed by all Christians. And it would be very well, “*Si aliquot diebus ante Festum Paschatis, et Pentecostis et Nativitatis Domini communiter servaremus;*” if we did all keep some such days before the feast of Easter, and Whitsuntide, and the Nativity of our Lord: with this caution only, that we do not think we *merit* any thing of God by our fastings.

Melancthon's sense is so commonly known, that I shall not set down his words, (which may be found in Mr. Thorndike<sup>7</sup>) for not only Cassander, but Pererius also (in his comment upon the xiv. chapter of the Romans) acknow-

7 Relig. Assem. p. 286.

ledge his opinion to be, that "Fasting and the observation of things indifferent, may be profitable, and conduce to God's worship; not immediately indeed, but mediately; for by Fasting a man is made more fit to pour out prayers, in which consists the worship of God."

Peter Martyr also resolves the question, whether men be bound to obey when princes or the Church appoint fasts, in these peremptory words;<sup>8</sup> "*Astringuntur sane lege fidei atque obedientia;*" they are bound certainly, both by the law of faith, and by obedience. For when fasts are propounded consonant to God's word, how can he who believes in God decline them? He cannot. Only it is to be understood, that they are bound who are able: for if any body be disabled by his age, by sickness, or by labours, in these cases, that which the Holy Scriptures say, must take place, "I will have mercy, not sacrifice." Which is an excellent resolution, for those scruplers I mentioned before to govern themselves by; who

8 In Lib. Judic. c. xx. p. 173.

being really infirm, are no more under this law (while they continue so) than little children, women with child, and aged persons, who need frequent refreshment.

And thus whole Churches have resolved; as Cassander acknowledges out of the Confession of Saxony, in which they declared their willingness "to observe the set Fasts, and other such like traditions; provided no opinion of merit were placed in such observances." And the Bohemian Confession expressly consents, "that such rites and ceremonies ought to be retained, which do advantage faith, the worship of God, peace and order: whosoever they had for their author, whether Synod, Pope, Bishop, or any other."

And if any particular Doctor hath decried such things, it hath been in opposition to the superstitious observance of them, the opinion of merit, satisfaction, and such like conceits, with which too many minds were infected: and so the Divines of the Roman Church have not been sparing of such kind of censures. Pererius in particular, a learned Jesuit, in his



comments on the first of Daniel, takes notice of a sort of fasting in these days, which many affect upon a perverse account (as his words are :) They either “thinking the sum of Christian perfection to consist in the service of abstinence alone; or thereby hunting after the praise of men, or having so little prudence, that they extend their Fastings beyond measure: to the great hinderance, that is, and damage, of far better and more profitable things.”

I will end this part of my discourse with the declaration which Zanchy makes in his own and his brethren's name, to satisfy those who objected to them the laying aside of the fast of Lent. “They cannot justly accuse us,” saith he, “that we condemn the Quadragesima, (i. e. the fast of Lent) which is so ancient in the Church, and by the Holy Fathers received and approved. We do not condemn that Lent fast, which the ancient Fathers observed without superstition, but”....and so he goes on to show it is only novel, superstitious, and dangerous conceits (of satisfaction and merit,



and the worship of God) unto which it was abused, that they rejected.

Thus he concludes his discourse which he entitles, “*De peculiari quadragesimalis temporis sanctificatione*:<sup>9</sup>” which in the beginning also he states after this manner, (that preachers might rightly instruct their people) “our judgment is, that a difference ought to be made, between the first institution of this season, and that which followed after.

<sup>9</sup> Tome iv. p. 694. in quartum præceptum.





## OF THE LENT FAST.

Part Third.

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### CHAPTER XV.

OF THE ANTIQUITY OF THE LENT, OR SPRING  
FAST.

**I**T is the confession of that learned Divine now mentioned, that “there is no man, unless he be altogether unskilful in histories, and never saw the ancient Fathers, who doth not acknowledge the observation of this time of Lent, to be most ancient. For Telesphorus, who was the seventh Bishop of the Roman Church, and martyr (about the year of our Lord 139) makes mention of it, as observed in the Church before his time.”

And indeed it is so ancient, that there is no beginning to be found of it : which hath moved many to run it up to the very Apostolical times ; nay, to the Apostles themselves. For which there is more reason, perhaps, than now is commonly acknowledged. For if we consider that the first converts to christianity, were from among the pious Jews ; by whom it was propagated to the rest of the world (which is so clear in the Holy story, that it cannot be denied) and that those devout people had been accustomed by the discipline of John Baptist, who came to prepare men for Christ, to fast often (that is, twice a week, it is most likely, upon the days of their more solemn assemblies, according to the ancient practice of the stricter sort of that nation) we may very well suppose, as hath been already said, that when they became Christians they did not become less devout : but still continued, only upon other days, to keep such solemn times of prayer, with fasting, every week.

And why we should exempt the Apostles, when they were in any settled place, out of the

number of those, whose practice this was, I cannot imagine; but rather think they were exemplary to others herein: being in Fastings often (as I noted above) and by this, approving themselves the Ministers of God; who did not pamper their bodies, but bring them under, that their minds might be more fit for meditation, and prayer, and the illuminations of the Holy Ghost.

Which being as likely as anything that is not expressly recorded; it is no less likely that when those usual days of Fasting, came, in the course of the year, to be the very days on which our Lord was betrayed and suffered; the Apostles themselves observed them, together with the day on which He lay in His grave (if not all that week, before the memory of His resurrection from the dead) with a more than ordinary solemnity, both for fasting and prayer.

And this might be the meaning of those, who at first said, that the Lent Fast (meaning the solemn Fast before Easter) was of Apostolical Institution: because founded upon their

practice and example. Among whom I have reason to reckon St. Austin,<sup>1</sup> who expressly saith in his disputation, against Urbicus before mentioned, that though he found precepts for fasting, yet on what days men should not fast, and on what they ought, he did not find determined by any precept of Christ or his Apostles: and therefore where he saith this Fast was ordained by them, he can mean, by their example only. Which Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> himself saw to be so apparent, that he acknowledges, when not only he, but St. Ambrose and St. Hierom say the Lent Fast was ordained by our Lord, they mean, not by His precept, but by His example.

Now this example of the Apostles was so prevalent, that there needed not so much as an ecclesiastical constitution for this Fast (from whence others derive it) but all for a long time easily followed such great patterns of devotion. I say all, for no Church can be found, wherein a solemn Fast before Easter was not observed; which is a strong argument

<sup>1</sup> Epist. 86. ad Cassulanum.

<sup>2</sup> L. 2. de bonis oper. c. 14.

to prove it derived itself from such a beginning as I have mentioned: for otherwise it cannot be conceived how it should prevail universally in all countries, where the name of Christ was preached. As it is plain it did, by the eldest records we have of the Church: which I shall here set down at large, because it is besides my purpose, and as many as are sufficient I shall have occasion to mention in what follows.



## CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE VARIETY IN ITS OBSERVATION.

THE reader may take notice that I have hitherto mentioned only a solemn Fast before Easter, (which St. Clement calls the Paschal Fast) not yet determining the length of it; but affirming that it was observed more or less from the very beginning. I say more or less; because it cannot be denied, that there was great variety in the length of it. For Irenæus, as it is commonly known, writing to Victor, Bishop of Rome about the difference there was in the time of observing Easter, saith there was also a difference in the observation of the Fast before it: "Some supposing they ought to fast one day, some two, others more;"<sup>3</sup> for some (he saith) extended to forty: and reckoned their day by the hours of day and night; that is, fasted from evening to evening. Which

<sup>3</sup> Euseb. L. v. c. 24.

words some contend relate only to the Fast in the week before Easter; as the first part of them do, but the whole cannot; unless we understand forty not of days, but only of hours. Which is against the foregoing words, in which he speaks of days; and against the ancient reading which Ruffinus followed; who translates the words to the same sense that I have done. And his translation is from more ancient Greek copies, than any of those, which some are pleased now to follow: and is confirmed by J. Christopherson, and Sir Henry Savil, who read and distinguish the words in the same manner.<sup>4</sup>

Which things I have briefly touched to show, that whatsoever variety there was, it is still a confession of a Fast before Easter, distinct from all other: in that there is no variety; but all observed the Fast, as much as they did Easter; that is, the memory of our Lord's resurrection. And Irenæus saith that this variety did not begin in his age, but, as his

<sup>4</sup> Vide Bingham's Christian Antiquities. Book xxi. c. i §. 2.

(Vol. 7. p. 177. Edit. Straker. 1839.)



words are, "long before us, with our ancestors:" so it is evident from thence, that the Fast was not a new thing, but come down to them from times long before them, that is, from the Apostles.

This, if fairly considered, might help to settle all the controversies which are about this Fast of Lent. Which many have taken a great deal of pains to prove is not an Apostolical Constitution, nor so ancient as their days: but none of their arguments prove any more than this, that the Fast of forty days length, doth not derive itself from their ordinance or example. For they are of no force at all to prove, that the Paschal Fast, (that is, a solemn time for fasting and prayer, and such holy duties before Easter, of more or fewer days, as the devotion of Christians inclined them,) doth not proceed from Apostolical example. And if this were agreed, it would help to give us a right understanding in all the rest.

For when the Fast came to be generally extended to the length of forty days, and so

received and observed in the Church (which the forenamed Zanchy saith it appeared to him was, “non ita multo post Apostolorum tempora,” not very long after the Apostles’ times) that may be truly thought to be only by an ecclesiastical Constitution, And so St. Austin expressly resolves, that those forty days before Easter should be observed, “ecclesiæ consensio roboravit,” the consent of the Church hath established. Which being thus settled and confirmed so long ago, I cannot understand why any body should now go about to overthrow it: but rather employ their pains and learning in showing how it was, and how it ought now to be observed.

In which I cannot but commend the wisdom and piety of the forenamed Zanchius, who looks upon these forty days before Easter, as, “tempus ex pia veteris ecclesiæ ordinatione continuatum,”<sup>4</sup> a time continued” (and extended to this length) “by the pious ordinance of the ancient Church, in which the faithful are, more diligently than at any other time, exci-

<sup>4</sup> Ib. in quantum præcept, p. 696.

ted to repentance; both by fastings, and by prayers, and by hearing God's Word, and by other pious exercises:" (I suppose he means, giving alms more liberally, admonishing one another, and such like) "whereby they are prepared the more worthily to partake of the holy communion at Easter. And if any one," saith he, "thus define the forty days' Fast, who is there that can justly dislike it?"

None but those certainly who love to live licentiously, without any bridle; or those whom prejudice makes inconsiderate, and will not let them understand the meaning and intention of the Church in this institution. Which was not to tie every one to fast the whole forty days: but to employ themselves all that time, in some or other of the forenamed holy exercises, with more than ordinary strictness, and as many of those days, as they could bear, in fasting.

For as there was variety before, so there was after the Fast was determined to forty days, in which some fasted more, some fewer days, as may be clearly proved, for if Dio-

nysius of Alexandria<sup>5</sup> say true (about the year 255.) of the six days before Easter, (which were the severest part of the Fast; and St. Basil in his time calls the five days of fasting, desiring his auditors to keep a five days' truce with their mouth<sup>6</sup>) that all did not fast equally and alike: but some continued to fast all the six days, others only fasted two days, others three, others four, and some none at all: then we may well suppose, the rest of the forty days before going, were not kept by all with the like strictness; but some fasted more days, some fewer, and some were not able to bear any Fast at all.

But besides this inference, which may be drawn from his words, we have express testimony, that they were observed variously, as men could bear. For St. Chrysostom,<sup>7</sup> I observe, in a sermon of his, in the third week in Lent, saith that it was a general custom among his people to ask one another, in Lent time, how many weeks every one had fasted. And

<sup>5</sup> Biblioth. Patrum Tom. 1. p. 308.

<sup>6</sup> Orat. 1. de. jejunio.

<sup>7</sup> Hom. xvi. ad Pop. Antiochen.

that one might hear them answering, that some had fasted two, others three, others all the weeks. Which difference he doth not censure, but only tells them, that none of them had fasted to purpose, if they had not abstained from evil speaking and backbiting; and were not cured of their wicked habit of swearing and such like sins. And Petitus hath evidently proved that in St. Austin's time, and Leo the Great's, they fasted but three days in a week at Rome, during the Lent season. And so Socrates represents their practice at Rome in his time (which was near that of Leo's) that "they fasted three continued weeks before Easter, except upon the Saturdays and Lord's days."<sup>8</sup> And St. Ambrose saith in one of his sermons, that he heard very many of the faithful, fasted interchangeably one week in Lent, and dined in another. For which indeed he reproves them; but it was a thing practised, or something like it, in other places, as Sozomen tells us:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Serm. 34.<sup>9</sup> L. vii. cap. 19.

for having said how some countries made Lent to consist of six weeks of days, others of seven ; he saith, some fasted three of the six or seven weeks alternately, or scatteredly, as his word is, (sometimes forbearing all food, and sometimes using it) and others continuedly fasted the three weeks immediately preceding Easter, without any interruption.

Which variety, I suppose arose, from the various tempers, dispositions, employments, and perhaps devotion, of divers people ; who not condemning nor censuring one another, preserved still a uniformity in this variety : all being more than ordinarily diligent, in some or other of the solemn religious exercises of this season, during the whole time. And thus Irenæus saith, that in the variety that was in this Fast long before his time, there was a perfect agreement among Christians : “the difference of the Fast not dissolving the union of faith.” No, nor the bond of peace ; for he saith expressly they all lived peaceably one with another, as they did also in his days. Nay, St. Austin makes this diversity in eccle-

siastical customs, to be represented by the divers colours wherewith the raiment of the king's daughter<sup>1</sup> was embroidered.<sup>2</sup> This variety, saith he, consists well enough with one faith, which is the inward glory of the Church; for it is only in the garment, that is, in external observations; nay, the garment is thus varied by divers celebrations, so that it is not torn by contentions.

Which sense of things if we all had engrafted in our minds, and both studied and heartily loved this blessed temper; we might with singular profit keep this Fast of Lent. Which was wisely prolonged by the Church to forty days (and in some places to more, as I might plainly show, were it the business I design) not to tie every one precisely to fast so many days: but that all might have scope, and room enough, in some part or other of this time, if not in the whole, for such holy exercises as these; to call themselves to the strictest account; to examine their consciences narrowly; to humble and afflict themselves for

1 Psalm xlv.

2 Epist. 86.



all their sins; and particularly to amerce, as I may call it, and punish themselves by frequent fastings, for their frequent abuses of God's good creatures; to form and settle holy resolutions of thorough amendment; to pray to God with greater ardour, both in private and public, for His pardon and His holy spirit; to meditate upon the wonderful love of God in our Saviour Christ, who will receive penitent sinners into mercy; and to fit themselves to receive the tokens and pledges of the same, with the higher joy and gladness; because with the fuller assurance of His being reconciled to us (being thus disposed) through the death and passion of Christ Jesus.

And here it may be briefly noted, that the Paschal Fast was thus enlarged, rather than any other time chosen for these holy exercises; because then we remember the bitter agonies and passion of Christ for our sins: which are the most powerful motives to make us hate and forsake them; and the clearest demonstration what the deserts of them were; and how stupendous the loving kindness of God, which



would accept, and also find a ransom for us. Which account of it, St. Austin I observe gives in his famous epistle to Januarius;<sup>3</sup> in what part of the year could the observation of it be appointed more congruously, "*nisi confinis atque contigua Dominicæ Passioni?*"—but that which was bordering upon and contiguous unto the passion of our Lord?

As for the limitation of this solemn season of humiliation to the number of forty days; therein, I suppose, the Church had a respect to Christ's fasting forty days, in the dedication of the new covenant, as Moses and Elias had done in the giving and restoring of the old. Not that they thought themselves bound precisely and absolutely by that example: but looking upon it only as a convenient direction (as a learned writer of our own<sup>4</sup> speaks) in determining the length of this Fast: wherein they might also be put in mind, of that sore trial and temptation, which Christ then endured for our sakes. This being a number likewise famous in Scripture upon many other

<sup>3</sup> Epist. 119.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Field "Of the Church," L. 3. c. 20.

accounts; for the rain which made the flood, continued forty days; and so many days the spies spent in searching out the good land; and Ezekiel in the type he was ordered to draw out of the siege of Jerusalem, lay on his right side, to “bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days;”<sup>5</sup> after which number of days also, Jonah threatened Nineveh should be destroyed; and so many our Saviour staid with His disciples after His resurrection, before He ascended into heaven. Which might move the Church to think of this number rather than any other: but without any opinion that it was strictly bound thereunto: for then the Church would have precisely kept to it, which it hath not done. For deducting the Saturdays and Sundays, which were not anciently fasted in the Eastern Church, nor in some parts of the Western, no not at Rome itself; there do not remain forty days. And if only the Sundays be deducted, as now in the Western Churches, there will still want of that number of forty days. For those, in the

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel iv. 6.

*caput* as they call it, or beginning of the Fast, (which being put to the rest make up that number) it must be confessed, were not observed at the first, but added afterward.



## CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE MANNER OF ITS OBSERVATION.

NOW in the *manner* of fasting it must be acknowledged also there was a variety, as well as in the number of days, which they fasted. For in the Holy week, as it was called, they that were strict would eat nothing, but bread, and water, and salt; which was called dry diet, and was proper to those six days, as we read in Epiphanius.<sup>6</sup> In the rest of the Lent, some would eat only fish; others allowed themselves also birds; because of the same nature they thought with with fish, being made out of the water, as Moses testifies. But others forbore all fish likewise, as well as flesh; which was the custom of the Greeks: yet the famous Monks of mount Athos

<sup>6</sup> Hæres. lxxv. n. 6. in two of which days, just before Easter, some eat nothing at all.

would eat oysters; because they had no blood in them. Some contented themselves with eggs and fruit: others forbore both, and lived upon bread and herbs and roots. And St. Hierom saith there were some, who would not so much, as eat a bit of bread; which Socrates also testifies. But in this variety they all agreed in one thing, which was to eat nothing at all, until the evening; and then, such food only as was least delicate: not confining themselves to any particular thing, but as their bodies would bear.

No man pretended to fast if he ate a dinner; though it were of fish only, or any other less nourishing thing: and though on other Fasts, they broke them at three o'clock in the afternoon, they did not take that liberty in the Lent Fasts, but continued them, as I said, till night. At which time also they did not indulge themselves in the best fare, of any sort whatsoever; but contented themselves with the meanest, which they used also with much moderation. Socrates indeed saith, that some fasted only till the ninth hour (which is our

three of the clock) but they were very few, if we will believe all other ancient writers.

In short, they fasted all day, and used abstinence at night.

Out of all the records of the Church which speak of this, I shall select only a passage out of St, Austin, which most lively describes the true sort of abstinence, and reproves the false. It is in his books about the manners of the Catholic Church,<sup>7</sup> compared with those of the Manichees. Where speaking of the great abstinence to which the Manichees pretended, he puts this query to them. "If there be a man to be found, as there may, who is so moderate, that he doth not eat twice in one day; and at supper, with a little bacon, hath only a dish of herbs ointed and seasoned with the same lard, served up to him, sufficient to suppress his hunger; quenching his thirst also, for his health's sake, with two or three draughts of diluted wine, and this is his daily diet: on the other side there is one who tastes no flesh, nor drinks a drop of wine, but hath

exquisite and far-fetched foreign fruits of the earth, with mushrooms and such like things set before him, in variety of dishes, and sprinkled with good store of spice, at three of the clock in the afternoon; and eats also a good supper of the same things at the beginning of night: drinking therewith mead, and cyder, and other good liquors (like enough to wine, and excellent in sweetness) and that not merely to quench thirst, but as much as he list, for his pleasure: which of these two, as to eating and drinking, do you judge to be most abstemious? I do not think you are so very blind, but you see that the latter is a glutton in comparison with the former. And what can be more mad, than to say, that he who fills his belly with all manner of pleasant things (save only flesh-meat and wine) hath kept the rule of sanctity; but that the other, who eats only so much of the vilest food (seasoned with a little smoky lard) as will suffice for the refectation of his body, with three cups of wine, merely for the support of health, is prepared for certain punishment?"

Thus that great man (whose words I have endeavoured to contract a little) represents, as I take it, the practice of the Catholics in their fastings. By which we may make a just judgment of our own in these days: and not deceive ourselves with a dangerous opinion, that we have performed this duty; *when we have only changed our diet, not forborn our dinners; or if we have, crammed ourselves with delightful suppers.* This is not only against all ancient practice, and the repeated admonitions of the holy Fathers, but is still condemned by good men in all Churches. Particularly by Lindanus<sup>8</sup> an excellent writer in the Roman Church, in the last age: whose words I shall not translate at large, but only observe in short, that he sadly bewails the state of the Catholic Church, in which “the shadow only of fasting is left.”

As for those that cannot possibly fast so long, it never was the intention of the Church to oblige them: but they were anciently exhorted, as appears by St. Chrysostom (whose

<sup>8</sup> Panopliæ, L. 3. cap. xi.



discourse on this subject I shall produce anon) to take some refreshment. But then, it was only to support their spirits from fainting; and they all humbled themselves before God, with supplications and prayers; especially upon the most solemn days of prayer; and bewailed those sinners, which now did open penance; and beseeched God to give them true repentance; and endeavoured to perfect their own; and gave alms to the poor; and spent more time than ordinary in reading and hearing God's Holy Word: in which and such like holy exercises both one and other passed this time of Lent; satisfying themselves with these spiritual pleasures, while they denied their appetites in bodily delights.

That is, they that could not fast, took care notwithstanding to perform all those Christian duties, which it is the very design and end of fasting to help and promote.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE GREAT USEFULNESS THEREOF.

AND now who sees not the reasonableness of this observance, and the great benefit we may receive thereby ? If instead of contending about it (for which, thus understood, I can see no ground) we would all set ourselves to make the best use we can, of what the Church hath piously ordained, and for many ages profitably practised.

I do not know how it appears to others, but it seems very strange to me ; that what the Church had strengthened and confirmed by an unanimous consent in St. Austin's time, should find any dissenters from it in these days. And yet I fear there are some, I wish they be not many, who scarce observe Good Friday, that is, the day of our Saviour's Passion, with any

of that strictness, which I have mentioned; but eat and drink, and do all other things, as upon the rest of the days of the year. A thing never heard of in the Church of Christ, till these latter days, which, among other scandals, affords matter for the lamentations of the best men and women among us, during the Lenten season; especially upon that great and solemn day, when, by common consent, Christians anciently made a conscience of fasting strictly.

And they who now make no reckoning of it, would do well, nay, they are bound in conscience, to consider, if they meet with this little book, what I have therein represented: and I hope they will be convinced, that they ought to do a great deal more, if they be able, than fast and pray, and humble themselves before God on that day. For if they be persuaded that Fasting is a Christian duty; and that there is frequent occasion for it, both upon their own account, and others; and so become sensible that the weekly Fasts were wisely ordained: they will easily see, that there is great use of this yearly Fast of Lent;

that the defects of their weekly humiliations and devotions may hereby be supplied.

If there were no other reason for it, this might be sufficient to satisfy pious and humble minds; who being sensible of the slightness of their weekly humiliations and repentance, cannot but be disposed to hearken to the voice of the Church which calls them to fast before festivals; especially to a most solemn fast before the most solemn yearly festival: that by taking a stricter account of themselves, and perfecting their humiliations and repentance, they may have a right (as Mr. Thorn-dike speaks) to the blessing, which we then celebrate. For which very reason Peter Martyr<sup>9</sup> thinks the annual Fast was ordained among the Jews, by God Himself; because many sins had been committed by the people, in the whole year foregoing; and the ceremonies of the law had not been diligently observed.

And that suggests another reason why this Fast of Lent, should be diligently observed.

9 In cap. xx. L. Judicum p. 171.

For, besides what relates to our private concerns, there may have been some public offence committed by the community (I mean by the whole body of the people) which may justly require the public humiliation of the whole Church. We see, for instance, several wholesome laws and constitutions, both in Church and State, generally disregarded, or at least not observed. There are certain vices also, in some ages, universally prevail, without any check; whereby the people become less sensible of their guilt. There was a time when the Holy Communion was not administered for several years together, in a great many parishes of England. It is still, perhaps, not so frequently administered, much less attended, as it ought to be. The public prayers (which are the chief) are not so frequented, as the service of God requires. And if nothing of this, or any thing like it, were known to be publicly done, or omitted, contrary to our Christian duty; yet it would be very safe for us to suspect, there may be much lurking wickedness, which is not espied; or, at least, that several sins of

ignorance have been committed; and that by mistake, and through weakness, many errors may have been in the public management of affairs both in Church and State: the best of men being apt sometimes to do amiss; even when their intentions and designs are right and good. Upon which score, if there were no other reason for it, the Fast of Lent is most necessary; that there be a public humiliation, for public errors, if not for public sins.

Besides, every one knows that this anciently was the season, for putting such persons to open penance, as stood convicted of notorious sins: and for sending up prayers to God, like public ambassadors (as Tertullian<sup>1</sup> and others speak) to sue in their behalf for peace and reconciliation; and to beseech God to grant them true repentance, and perfect remission and forgiveness.

And if this Godly discipline be not now practised; there is the greater reason for all good Christians to bewail it; and, looking

<sup>1</sup> L. de Pœnit. c. ix.

upon this as one public neglect, join together in public repentance. For which there must be some time appointed; and what time so proper as this, which was the time anciently appointed, for this, now neglected, discipline? And the time, wherein the whole Christian Church, as one man, humbled themselves before God, both high and low, rich and poor, to beg of God a general pardon of all offences, with fasting and alms, and with resolution of amendment of life.

Insomuch, that they who always live in a strict and circumspect care to please God in every thing, may find also something to do at this season, as well as other men: if it be but in bewailing higher offenders; and putting up fervent prayers for them, which avail much from a righteous man. But if they be so exact and circumspect as they ought; they may find likewise, that they have not performed the duties of their particular places, and relations, with such diligence; that there are many defects, many oversights and slips, for which they have need to ask a pardon.

But if there were nothing of this, that could be supposed, yet there is a benefit which the most perfect Christians may reap from the observance of this Lent season : and that of an inestimable value in their account. Which is, that it will be a time of retirement from the hurry of the world ; which is very desirable to all wise and good minds (that they may enjoy God and themselves without disturbance) but hard to meet withal, especially in populous cities ; unless by common consent, men forbear their visits, and keep at home (which is most suitable to a time of Fasting) and decline their wonted meetings during this season (unless upon their necessary business) that they may have leisure to be better acquainted with themselves, and with the affairs, and enjoyments of another world.

Whence it is that St. Athanasius<sup>2</sup> calls fasting, the life of Angels ; not only because during the time we can live without meat and drink, we imitate their happy life, and are, as he speaks, of their order, and placed in their

2 Lib. de Virgin. p. 1047.



rank; but because it clarifies the mind, and gives it both ability and leisure to withdraw itself from the company of things here below, and raise its thoughts to the celestial company above.

To which purpose, St. Chrysostom, as his manner is, discourses more copiously, in a sermon he made at the entrance of the Lent Fast.<sup>3</sup> Which season he desires his auditors to prepare themselves “to entertain, with the same joy; that a chaste and modest virgin is brought withal to her bridal chamber. Let none of you,” saith he, “be sad; let no dejection appear in any countenance, when he is invited to this Fast: but let all be exceeding glad, and glorify God, the great Curator of souls, who hath provided for them this remedy. Whose advent ought to be received with much pleasure, because the ensuing days of fasting, are the true holy-days, and time of rest. Wherein is the safety of souls, wherein is peace, wherein is concord and happy agreement; wherein, all busy provision for this life

<sup>3</sup> Hom. i. in Gen.

being laid aside, there is no noise, no tumult, no running about of cooks, no slaying of oxen and killing of sheep: but these being removed out of the way, there is all quiet, and tranquillity, and charity, and joy, and peace, and gentleness, and innumerable other good things in the stead thereof." In short, he represents this as "an heavenly time; wherein the mind being made lighter, by fasting or abstinence, may the more freely take its flight into its celestial country."

Which he repeats again in another place, after this manner.<sup>4</sup> "The spring time is pleasant to mariners, and no less welcome to those that till the ground; but it is not so delightful to either of them as fasting-days, the spiritual spring of souls, and their safe port and tranquillity, are to those who are desirous to lead a Christian life. For therefore the countryman rejoices at the sight of the spring, because then the earth appears beauteously painted, with variety of flowers; and the mariners are then glad also, because the sea is

4 De jejun. et de Geneseos lectione.

more quiet, and they are in less danger to be tossed by its waves and billows: but therefore fasting is a pleasant spring time unto us, because then, not the tumult of winds and waves, but of thoughts and passions, and fleshly lusts, are appeased and laid, and the garland, not of flowers, but of spiritual graces is then gathered."

Thus I have briefly shown how useful, nay, how necessary this Lent Fast is, by which all sorts of men in the Church may reap very great benefits. Of which let experience be witness, by making a serious trial; for where there remain no more than merely the faint remainders of the ancient strictness in this discipline, they produce such considerable effects, that we may easily know thereby, what profit might be expected from the complete and faithful observance of it.

Hear what an accomplished Gentleman of our own Country, writes upon this subject: whose words I shall the rather set down, because they notably illustrate the usefulness of this institution.

“At one time of the year,”<sup>5</sup> saith he, speaking of a very loose country) “namely in Lent, they are much reformed: no such blaspheming, nor dirty speaking as before; their vanities of all sorts laid reasonably aside; their pleasures abandoned; their apparel, their diet, and all things else, composed to austerity and state of penitence; they have daily then their preaching, with collection of alms, whereto all men repair; and, to judge of them by the outward shew, they seem generally to have very great remorse for their wickedness. Insomuch that I seemed here to have best learned the right use of Lent; in this country first to have discerned the great fruit of it; and the reason for which those sages at first did institute it.

“Neither can I easily accord to the fancies of such, as because we ought at all times to lead a life worthy of our profession, think it therefore superstitious to have one time wherein to exact or expect it more than other: but rather do thus conceive, that seeing the cor-

<sup>5</sup> Sir E. Sandys', *Europæ Spec.*, Sect. 9.

ruption of times and wickedness of men's nature is now so exorbitant, that it is an hard matter to hold the ordinary sort of men within the lists of piety, justice, and sobriety; it is fit therefore there should be one time at the least in the year, and that of reasonable continuance, wherein the season itself, the use of the world, the practice of all men (for even the Jews and Turks have their Lents although different) the commandment of superiors, the provision of fit means to assist them therein; and in sum, the very outward face and expectation as it were of all things, should constrain men how wicked and wretched soever, for that time, at least, to recal themselves to some more severe cogitations and courses."

"For which there is very great reason" (as he proceeds to show) "lest sin having no such bridle to check it at any time, should at length wax head-strong and unconquerable in them: and that, on the other side, being thus necessarily immured for a while, though but to make a bare shew of walking in the paths

of virtue, they might afterwards more sincerely and willingly persist (as custom makes hard things pleasant) or at leastwise return more readily again unto them some other time." Thus that excellent person.

Which puts me in mind of a discourse of St. Chrysostom upon this subject:<sup>6</sup> in which, upon the first day of Lent, he represents how this season prepares the mind to be a fit soil to receive the Divine doctrine, just as a field when the weeds are killed, is disposed for the seed. "For Fasting," saith he, "is the tranquillity of the soul, there is no tumult to-day, no noise, no chopping of meat, no running about of cooks: but all these being gone, this city is become like to a grave, sober and chaste matron, or mistress of a family. Upon which when I cast mine eyes, and observe what a sudden change there is in it, from what it was yesterday, I am amazed at the force of Fasting. Which having made an entrance into every man's conscience, hath

transformed the thoughts, and purified the mind, not only of the magistrates, but of private persons: not only of the free-born citizens, but of servants; both of men and of women; of rich as well as poor; and not only of those who are Greeks, but even of Barbarians also. But what do I speak of the magistrates and private persons? Even he who wears the diadem, the crowned head, like all the rest, hath bowed his conscience to this obedience. And to day there is no difference between the table of the rich and of the poor: but every where a spare diet, free from luxury, and vanity. And every one comes to-day with more pleasure to a slender table, than yesterday he came to one furnished with all delicacies; where the most generous wines also were not wanting. You see, my beloved, from the very proeme, what the power of Fasting is."

Whereby he hoped they would be cured of all their diseases; and that it would prove as good physic to their souls, as it is, in many cases, to the body. "For by Fasting," saith

he, in a following sermon,"<sup>7</sup> "I mean abstinence from all sin; which is the end of abstinence from food. Therefore we fast from meat and drink that we may bridle and curb the lusts of the flesh: and make the horse more easily obey his rider. He that fasts ought above all things to refrain from anger; to learn meekness and gentleness; to have a contrite heart; to repel all absurd desires; to have before his eyes continually the Eye of the eternal Judge,—the tribunal which cannot be corrupted; to be as much better than others as he is richer; to have the command of his wealth; to be liberal in giving alms; and to admit not so much as an evil thought against his neighbour. This is the true Fast as Isaiah teaches. And therefore let this be our care; and let us not fancy, as many do, that Fasting consists only in eating nothing till the evening. This is not the business; but that together with abstinence from meat, we may abstain from all things that may hurt us; and have more leisure for spiritual em-

7 Hom. viii. in Gen.



ployments. A Faster ought to be humble, mild, lowly, a contemner of the glory of this life; for as he hath despised the care of his appetite; so it becomes him as little to mind vain glory, and look to Him alone that searches the heart and the reins; to make prayers and confessions to God with great diligence, and to do himself good by doing good and giving alms to others."

Thus let us spend every week, nay, every day, of this Lent (saith he, in another sermon,<sup>8</sup> going over the same things again in little different language) and then there was reason, he thought, to hope that they might get a habit of these virtues before the conclusion.

And to the same purpose St. Athanasius, in his book of virginity before mentioned. "It is not simply fasting, which we magnify: for if thou fastest, and dost not keep thy mouth that it speak no evil; if thou dost not guard it from venting passionate and angry words, from telling lies, from perjury, from back-biting and slandering thy neighbour; if any

<sup>8</sup> Hom. xv. in Gen.

of these go out of thy fasting mouth, thy fasting will profit thee nothing: all thy pains in this, is but lost labour."

And who can think that if such lessons as these did all the Lent long still sound in men's ears, and were continually pressed on their hearts, they would be without any effect for the reforming of their lives? No, the very face of all things then looking so solemn (as the ingenious Gentleman now named observes) would naturally constrain them in some measure to be serious; and that, in all probability, would occasion just reflections upon themselves and their evil courses; which would produce, in some or other, new resolutions and purposes of amendment.

And if a thorough reformation should be wrought in none; yet this restraint upon men's evil inclinations, for such a considerable time, would put such a stop to the progress of vice, that it would make men, if not better, yet less wicked, than otherwise they would have been. Of which that Gentleman was so sensible, that he looks upon it as the

special great mercy and grace of God, which hath preserved the severity of Lent, in those countries, where looseness of life is so great; that were it not for this, “the floods of ungodliness growing so strong and outrageous, and having no-where either bounds or banks to restrain them, might plunge whole nations into such a gulph of wickedness, as should leave no hope of their recovery.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

## A FURTHER SATISFACTION TO SOME OBJECTIONS.

**B**UT there are some who imagine there is no need of a set public Fast, of such long continuance as the Fast of Lent is, for these good purposes; because every man may humble himself before God for his offences, and repent himself of them in private, at such times as he thinks best, or can best spare, to be set apart for such holy uses.

Unto which exception I think sufficient satisfaction hath been given, in what was last said, if men would considerately weigh it. But because it is very useful to have a distinct knowledge of things, I shall give a particular answer to it. And to the first part of it, I shall return the same answer that our excellent Hooker hath already made. That no doubt penitency is in this like prayer; that it will be acceptable to God whether perform-

ed in public or in secret. Howbeit, as in prayer, if men were left wholly to their own choice of such times as they thought fit, for their voluntary meditations in their closets, and not drawn by law and public orders unto the open assemblies of the Church at certain times and hours, it may be easily conjectured what Christian devotion would that way come unto, in a short time : even so in this of penitency we are taught by sufficient experience, without any further trial, how little it avails to tell men of washing away their sins by tears of Repentance ; and so to leave them altogether to themselves. For alas ! they little think of this, but pass over their numerous sins, without taking any considerable time to bewail them and repent of them : and therefore the Church had reason to set a time apart for this discipline ; wherein the public example of all may be unto every particular person, a most effectual means, to put them in mind, and even draw them to that, which they all quite and clean forget ; as if penitency were no part of a Christian man's duty.

As for the other part of the exception, which is the long continuance of this set time; I gave the reason of it before; that men might shake off the habits of intemperance and impurity, of evil-speaking, lying, and such like sins. Unto which having been long accustomed, they cannot presently get rid of them; but by making it their business for so many weeks, to refrain them, may possibly quite forsake them, and never return unto them.

And if they that are not able to fast totally from meat and drink, would use their utmost endeavour to abstain from those sins to which they find themselves most inclined, and to deny all manner of bad desires; they might without fasting attain the end for which fasting is ordained: which I repeat again for the further satisfaction of those, who are troubled because they are not able to fast all day, at such times as the Church appoints.

For whose sake I shall enlarge a little more upon this subject. And as I have shown before, that there are many people that cannot bear the discipline of fasting (particularly,

they that are of a weak constitution, and can eat but little at a time; who therefore require frequent reparations of the decays of nature) so now I shall add to that number, such as out of choice eat always sparingly; no more, as near as they can guess, than will just suffice to support their strength, for the discharge of their duties in their several employments. These men leading always such an abstemious life, that it may be called a perpetual abstinence, St. Chrysostom also excuses from the obligation of fasting. Whose discourse I think fit to set down, for the full satisfaction of such kind of scruples.

For the understanding of which the reader must know, that his Church had been thronged with company from the beginning of Lent, till about the ninth or tenth day: when he observing there was but a very thin congregation, he begins his sermon in this manner.<sup>9</sup> “What is the matter that your assembly is so small to-day, and we have not such a concourse, as hath usually been here? Perhaps

<sup>9</sup> Hom. x. in Genes.

some are ashamed after they have been at a carnal table, to come to this spiritual; and therefore we have not their company. But let such hearken to what the wise man saith, 'There is a shame that bringeth sin: and there is a shame which is glory and grace.'<sup>1</sup> No man hath reason to blush, if he come from his corporal repast, to partake of the spiritual. A sober hearer, though he have dined, is not unfit for this assembly: as on the contrary, a listless and careless, though he remain fasting, gets no good thereby. I do not speak this to unloose you from the strictness of fasting (God forbid) for I much approve and praise those who are fasting: but I would have you to understand, that you should come after a sober manner, and not merely out of custom, unto spiritual things; and that it is not eating, but negligence, disorderly passions and affections, and lusts uncurbed, that make men unfit for our Sermons. For, beloved, if by reason of the weakness of thy body, thou canst not continue all the day fasting, no wise



man will reprove thee for it. For we serve a gentle and merciful Lord, who exacts nothing of us beyond our strength : nor doth He simply require fasting and abstinence of us, and that we should remain fasting till this hour : but that, throwing away all cares for the things of this life, we should bestow all our leisure in spiritual employments. And if we order our life with a sober mind, and whatsoever leisure we have be employed in spiritual things, and we eat merely for necessity, and so much as needs and no more, bestowing all our life in some good work or other ; there is no need then that we are in, of that help which is received from fasting. Which was not ordained for such kind of men ; but because human nature is negligent, and delights in pleasure, and seeks for ease and liberty ; therefore our most merciful Lord, like a tender hearted Father, devised this medicine of fasting : that delicacies and making much of ourselves might be cut off, and we might translate our thoughts about the things of this life, unto spiritual employments."

“If therefore there be any here present, whom the infirmity of their body will not permit to continue fasting, without their dinner, I exhort such both to refresh their bodily infirmity, and not to deprive themselves of this spiritual instruction: but (having taken their bodily repast) to be so much the more studious of it. For there are certainly, there are ways, by which far wider doors of confidence towards God may be opened, than by mere abstinence from food. He therefore that takes some food, being unable to fast, let him give larger alms; let him send up more fervent prayers; let him be more forward, and show greater alacrity in hearing God’s word. In those things, his bodily infirmity can be no hindrance to him. Let him be reconciled to his enemies; let him drive all remembrance of injuries out of his heart; and if he hath done these things, he hath kept the true fast which the Lord requires of us. For He commands us to abstain from meat, for these things’ sake; that we should check the wantonness of the flesh; and

make it obedient and tractable to fulfil His commandments.

“Wherefore knowing these things, I beseech you, who can fast, that you intend and increase, as much as possible, this your good and laudable forwardness: for the more the outward man decays, the more your inward man is renewed. Fasting brings under the body, and bridles its disorderly motions: it makes the soul also more clear and bright; giving it wings also, and making it light, and ready to soar aloft. As for our brethren who cannot fast, do you exhort them, that they would not for this cause refrain from their spiritual food: tell them what I now say; and let them know, that not he who eats and drinks moderately is unworthy of this auditory, but he that is lazy and dissolute. And tell them also what the Apostle saith in that oracle of his; that “both he that eateth, eateth to the Lord; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” In like manner, let him that fasteth, give thanks to God, who gives him strength able to support the labour of

fasting : and he that fasteth not, let him also give thanks, that nothing of this nature can do him hurt, nor hinder him from minding the salvation of his soul ; if he be pleased to attend it. For it cannot be told how many ways our most merciful God hath provided, by which, if we will, we may attain the highest confidence in Him.

“These things I have said for the sake of the absent, that occasion of shame might be taken from them ; and they might know there is no reason to be ashamed on this score. For to have eaten doth not bring confusion upon us, but to have done an ill thing. Sin is a great shame ; which if we have admitted, we ought not only to blush, but to hide ourselves for shame, and like condemned persons, bewail ourselves as miserable wretches : and yet not then to despond, but to make the more haste to penitence and pardon. For He is such a gracious Lord, that he requires no more, when by negligence we fall into sin ; but that we acknowledge our errors, and proceed no further, nor return again to the same offences.”

I omit the rest, for he repeats the same thing often over, in that sermon. In the conclusion of which, after he had expounded a portion of Holy Scripture, he excuses himself for holding them so long: which yet, he tells them, was not without reason; but that they who were present might be able to teach those who were absent the forenamed lesson; which he desires them to carry home with them, and instruct their absent neighbours in it. And the next day but one, he begins his sermon, with the very same lesson again: having also in his sermon, upon the day between these two, told them,<sup>2</sup> “that two days a week were allowed unto all, wherein to intermit their Fasting.” Which he compares to the resting places, and Inns which are upon the road, that weary travellers may turn in, and refresh themselves awhile; to enable them to go on their journey the more cheerfully; and to the ports and havens on the sea-shore, into which the mariners may run their vessel, when they have been tossed with the waves, and there wait for

<sup>2</sup> Hom. xi.

the opportunity of a fair wind to carry them forward. Such shores and havens, saith he, such rests and stays hath God granted us, for two days in the week, in this course of the Lent Fast: that the labour of it being a little remitted, and they that travelled in it refreshed, may afterwards go on with the greater alacrity.

Of the same opinion was his great friend, St. Basil, in his book of true virginity.<sup>3</sup> Where he saith, “we may apply to Fasting, those words of the Holy Scripture, ‘Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left.’ For as it is dangerous to incline to gluttony: so by too much abstinence to weaken the body, and make it unserviceable, is altogether as absurd and most irrational. For abstinence from the pleasures of the belly is not good in itself; but only as it contributes to the attainment of virtue. Now if we regard not that, by an immoderate abstinence, for which we chose to abstain from meat: we pervert the end of its institution; and by our folly, make it produce

<sup>3</sup> Tome i. p. 717.

the quite contrary effect, to what was designed in it. For the organ being broken and spoiled, our souls cannot converse with God, by reading and by prayers : nor can it comply with our desires, when we have a mind to do any good office to our brethren. We ought therefore to have a due care of the body : not for the body's sake, but for the sake of its ministry and service, in the acquisition of virtue. For it is impossible, either to attend to reading, or bend our mind to prayer, or indeed to be fit for any other profitable employment, if the body be not well treated, that it may be an obedient minister to us. And therefore the Apostle saith he brought under his body ; but it was that it might be his servant."

I might add the words of another great man, Gregory Nazianzen:<sup>4</sup> who shewing that we are ill advised, if we think to imitate all Christ's actions, instances among other things, in His fasting. "Christ," saith he, "fasted before He was tempted ; we before Easter : the Fasts are the same ; but there is not a

<sup>4</sup> Orat. xl. p. 659.



small difference in their times. For He fasted, to arm Himself against the assaults of temptations: we to testify our being dead with Christ, and for a preparatory purgation before the feast. And He fasted forty days; for He was God: but we proportion it to our strength, although there be some whose zeal persuades them to extend their fasting above their strength." And in another place<sup>5</sup> he asks this question, "What need they fast corporally, whose minds are purified by the Word?" Alluding as Elias Creten-sis thinks, to that passage of our Saviour's, "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken to you."<sup>6</sup> For such pure souls saith he, do not stand in need of that lustration which is made by fasting. In the Latin Church St. Austin discourses admirably on this subject, in his Book of the manners of the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> Where he relates what incredible Fasts were kept in some monasteries, both by men and women: yet so that no body was urged upon to such severities as they

5 Orat. 36 pag. 583.

6 John xv. 3.

7 Cap. xxxiii.



could not bear. Nothing was imposed upon them that refused, nor were they therefore condemned by the rest, because they were unable, they said, to imitate what they did. For they remembered with what pains the Scripture commands charity to us all: and were not unmindful of the words of St. Paul,<sup>8</sup> which I mentioned before out of St. Chrysostom. And, in fine, he saith, that when they were not well, they ate those things without scruple, from which they abstained when they were in health. Nay, to such as were weakly, and indeed to all, who could not, (for instance) have a good health without the use of wine (from which many abstained) they caused it to be given them, with great humanity and modesty. And some who foolishly refused what was offered, they brotherly admonished, "*Ne vano superstitione debiliores citius, quam sanctiores fiant,*" lest by vain superstition, they sooner made themselves more unhealthy, than more holy. They read also to them the command of the Apostle to Timo-

<sup>8</sup> Romans xiv.

thy, that he should drink a little wine, "because of his often infirmities." And in this manner they exercised piety diligently: but bodily exercise (as the same Apostle speaks) they knew was pertinent, "*ad exiguum tempus*," for a little time.

But I need not take any further pains in this matter: for if we had none of these authorities to rely upon, we might be instructed by common reason, that we ought to break the Fast before the appointed time of the day, if we find ourselves thereby indisposed and unfit for the necessary duties, which are to be performed on that day. This, Erasmus tells us, was the resolution of a Franciscan<sup>9</sup> of his acquaintance (one of the best men he ever knew) who, when his companion thought they must begin all their prayers again, because he had seen him eat before the time, said, "no such matter; there is no fault committed, but rather God is a gainer by what I have done: for before, our prayers were languid, flat and dull; but now we can sing the hymns with a

<sup>9</sup> L. xv. Epist. 14.

cheerful mind; and with such sacrifices God is pleased." Erasmus himself having been hard at study, which made it necessary, he thought, to comfort his stomach before dining-time with a mess of broth, advised with the same Franciscan about it: who answered, so that the lay brother might take notice of it, "Thou hast not offended: nay, thou hadst done ill, if thou hadst not taken that refreshment, but for a little food's sake hadst omitted thy sacred studies; and therefore done injury also to thy spare body."

I end this with the observation of the same great person in another place; that there are certain sorts of food, which so nourish the body, "*ut vivat, non ut lasciviat*,"<sup>1</sup> as merely to preserve life, not to make it wanton. And such kind of food if we choose, when necessity requires, merely for support, not for pleasure; it cannot be thought that God or any wise and good man will condemn us for it: when we are thereby only made more serviceable both to God and man.

<sup>1</sup> Lib. xxxi. Epist. 43.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE.

AND now, having shown what great benefits we may all receive by this pious discipline, what remains but that I press a little the practice thereof: which thus explained and understood as hath been said, I cannot see what any body, who hath a sense of religion, can object against it; nor why it should not be universally embraced by such persons, and gladly revived, after too long a disuse of so profitable an institution.

The foundations of which, if they were not laid originally by the Apostles themselves, yet they that began it, had great reason to think, it was so agreeable to their mind, that they would have thus enacted, if they had been then alive. For as Philo somewhere saith, that the laws of Moses, were nothing but the

monuments of the lives of the holy patriarchs ; who following the guidance of sincere understanding, without the prescription of laws, religiously observed all those commandments which were afterwards established by legal sanctions : so we may truly say, on the other side, that the polity and conversation of the Primitive Church, was a certain monument and representation of the evangelical discipline, and an uncorrupted rule of life. For, though there were at the first some tares scattered by the enemy, which grew up among the good corn, yet it cannot be denied that there was never greater sanctity, nor more perfect innocence, than was among the generality of the faithful ; who, as far as we can find, always observed some such solemn Fast, as I have treated of, before the memory of Christ's resurrection.

And therefore let not us now in these days refuse, much less reject, the service of that, which they found very helpful to them, for the preserving and perfecting of the Church, in purity and holiness ; and which good men,

in later times, have been so far from thinking superfluous, that they have rather inclined to like the custom of the Greek Church, who beside the great Lent, have other three Lents (of shorter continuance, and less strict observance) at other solemn times of the year. Let us not lay aside the use of fasting; the example of which flowed from the Prophets, John Baptist, our Lord Christ, and His Apostles: nor of this great Fast, which is commended to us by most ancient custom, (if not by greater authority,) by the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church in the best ages, and by the practice of all the faithful; and which is of very great moment, to dispose the mind for the reading and hearing of God's holy word, for prayer, for hymns, and all other Christian duties: whereby we may also draw upon ourselves and our families, nay, and upon the Church and kingdom whereof we are members, all manner of blessings, both by appeasing His Divine displeasure and averting public judgments, and, on the contrary, procuring great prosperity.

What if one part of Lent be now neglected? that is, the public discipline of the Church against notorious offenders, is not in these later ages exercised; shall all the rest therefore be laid aside with it? a serious believer, who hath any love to himself and the public safety, would rather conclude, that there is so much the greater reason to be more diligent in that part of it, from the practice of which nothing but our own wills can hinder us; since notorious offenders, it seems, are grown so numerous, that it is impossible to bring them to do open penance for their scandalous sins and wickedness.

That is, every man who hath as yet a sense of God and goodness remaining in him, ought to look upon the ensuing Lent, as a time set apart, for the calling himself to a strict and severe account: and accordingly, if any man find that he hath been a fornicator, though never so close and secret, a drunkard, or constant tipler, an extortioner, an hard-hearted worldling, a calumniator or backbiter, a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of His



holy word, or any other great sinner, he ought to apply himself conscientiously to fasting and prayer, and giving alms, and all other duties, which have been ever accounted proper for this season. And let him not spare himself, but spend his time, as much as he can, in all manner of humiliations, which have been often mentioned in this treatise: retiring himself from company and from business, to the utmost of his power, that he may lament his sins, and acknowledge his wretchedness, and most earnestly sue to be reconciled to God, whom he hath offended.

Lamentations indeed, and wailings, and such like things are not the whole business of repentance; yet I have demonstrated they are a part of it. And let me now add, they are such a part (though but small in comparison) that they alone may obtain great blessings from God upon us. If well disposed people would, in every parish of this nation, leave off their business upon the first day of Lent; that they might go to Church, in a mournful habit; with fasting, and tears, and dejection of face,



and prostrations, and all other such acknowledgements of their wretchedness, imploring the Divine mercy, it might prolong our tranquillity; and prevail for an adjournment, at least, of those judgments, which, if we consider our sinful life, we cannot but think we have justly deserved, and had reason long ago to expect, should have been inflicted on us. Especially if we continued all the Lent long to frequent the holy assemblies, (as often as necessary business would permit) to beseech God, in the most mournful manner, to take pity upon us: for then this outward part of penitence, with sorrow and grief and affliction of spirit (though no great reformation should follow) we might be confident, would obtain from God, those temporal benefits, which we call the outward parts of His favour. For so it did in the case of Ahab, concerning whom God saith to the Prophet, "Seest thou, how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days." The vengeance, though already denounced, was put off till a

further day, because he took that revenge upon himself which is mentioned in the foregoing verse; "He rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly."<sup>2</sup>

And therefore what may we not expect from this means, when it is but the outward part of repentance; and the best part is not wanting? But we truly humble ourselves in the sight of God, so as to submit ourselves unto him; to do whatsoever he would have us; faithfully resolving to become new men, and endeavouring so to be. Or, as our Church excellently exhorts us on the first day of Lent, "If we would, remembering the dreadful judgments hanging over our heads, and alway ready to fall upon us, return unto our Lord God, with all contrition and meekness of heart; bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance:" then our afflicting ourselves, our mourning, our

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28, 29.

weeping, our heaviness, and all the bodily exercises before named, would profit not a little; but be so acceptable unto God, that He would give us the greatest blessings; even “perfect remission and forgiveness,” as we pray in the Collect for this season. When these bodily exercises are the effects of true contrition of spirit, and when they are earnest of a new life, and a means we use to accustom ourselves to sobriety, to self-denial, to retirement, to shake off bad company, to devotion, to self-examination, to meditation, to pity and commiseration of the wants of others, to charity and works of mercy; then will “the Lord have mercy upon us,” as the Prophet speaks, “and he will multiply to pardon.”<sup>3</sup>

But let all those especially, who truly fear God among us, apply themselves with all seriousness to this much neglected duty: for others, I doubt, unless they be forced to it, will not regard these admonitions. Let it not content them that they do not follow the bad in their ungodly practices; but let them also

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lv. 7.

lament the scandal which they give ; and bewail the deplorable estate of such wretched souls : and deprecate the Divine displeasure ; beseeching Him to turn His anger from us, and to spare us for the sake of those pious souls, that with fasting, mourning and weeping, humbly supplicate His mercy. If the Church did now exercise that ancient discipline, so much spoken of, it would be duty of the very best among us to be present at the censures passed upon notorious offenders ; and (I showed out of St. Paul) to bewail them, and lament over them, in the most doleful manner. And why should we not do that voluntarily in our private retirements on fasting-days, which the Church doth not call for to be done in public ? Nay, we should the rather do it, (as I have often said,) and bewail this, among other things, that men are impatient of such discipline or anything like it ; that they will not submit to the government of their spiritual pastors (which is so great a sin, that it is next to rebellion against their Sovereign) and that offenders are so multiplied, as beyond all measure to exceed

the number of the good, who are not able to curb and restrain them. This is a lamentable state of things; and ought to affect the hearts of those who fear God, with grief and sorrow: especially when they consider the obstinate hardness of men's hearts in these evil courses; their great insensibleness either of their sin, or danger; and the cause of all this, their gross infidelity. Which it should be part of every good man's business to bewail in secret; beseeching God, all the Lent long, to put a stop to the floods of ungodliness, that they may not, like a deluge, overwhelm us.

It is not the custom of these parts of the world, to mourn in sackcloth and ashes; and therefore I have not pressed the very same significations of sorrow, grief, and humiliation, which were anciently used in the Eastern countries: but something like them, and equivalent to them, if we be not willing to use, it is because we think it a slight matter to offend the Divine Majesty, and are not afraid of His Almighty displeasure. For let us but awaken in our souls a sense of the heinous nature of those

sins, which we and others have committed against God; and of the danger we have incurred by our undutifulness to Him: and we shall not think it unreasonable to submit to some such discipline, as this, which is here proposed, instead of that which was practised of old, in other nations.

Let every one of us lay aside, all this Lent, our fine clothes, and the usual attire of our bodies; for that is still the custom of mourners in all places: and let us retire ourselves, as much as possible (for so mourners also do) making no visits, nor willingly receiving any, if nothing but civility oblige us to it.

Let the time be spent in this retirement, in reading and prayer; in examining our consciences, and bewailing our offences; in taking a view of the miserable state of mankind, and imploring the Divine mercy towards them; in laying to heart the sufferings of any of our Christian brethren; and such like spiritual exercises; which we are too apt to neglect, in a crowd of business, and of company.

Let the consideration of it, move us to afflict ourselves with Fasting; or, if that cannot be, with a spare diet.

Let the rich especially and those that live deliciously, deny their appetites; keep a slender table; and punish their excesses with harder fare.

Drink no wine, nor strong liquors, without necessity; make no feasts, nor accept of invitations to them.

Give alms liberally; and frequent the public prayers: and there let us humble ourselves before God, and blush to lift up our eyes unto heaven.

Yea, let us pray, "with all prayer and supplication, in the spirit"<sup>4</sup> (as the Apostle enjoins) that is, address ourselves to Him in all sorts of holy thoughts and devout affections; and that with great fervour and ardent desires; with tears and knocking our breasts, and bended knees, (as Theophylact expounds the words) beseeching Him, by the mystery of His holy

<sup>4</sup> Ephes. vi. 18.



incarnation ; by His holy nativity, and circumcision ; by His baptism, fasting and temptation ; by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, graciously to deliver us.

Tremble to think that you have so oft prayed in the Litany, that God would pitifully behold the sorrows of your hearts, when, perhaps, you had no sorrow at all there : and now if you have any, let it be testified in all the sorrowful actions, that I have named.

And forbear music, and dancing, and all such like pleasures.

Let those that have been slothful, content themselves with less sleep ; that they may have more time for prayer and heavenly thoughts.

They that have been too voluptuous, will do well also to lie hard ; though not upon the ground.

Finally, let there be a general abstinence from all manner of recreations ; unless the preservation of health make them necessary, and then use them privately.

Leave the play-houses quite empty ; and make the churches full : go to no public shows,



nor meetings; but spend the time, when you come from church, in setting all things right at home.

For St. Chrysostom, I remember, having heard that some of his auditors, since his last sermon, had been at an horse-race; bewails it in his next, as the loss of all the pains he had bestowed upon them, from the beginning of Lent. And, among other things, tells them, it gave great scandal to Jews and to Gentiles: who seeing those that were at church daily, mingle themselves at those meetings, with such as came not thither, think, saith he, that all we do is a delusion; and that we are all alike, no better than themselves. A great deal more he saith on this subject, in his sixth and seventh sermon upon Genesis; and begins his forty-first sermon with the very same matter. In like manner St. Basil<sup>5</sup> chides those, who as soon as sermon was done, went and played at dice and tables: it being to no purpose to afflict the body with fasting, if the mind con-

<sup>5</sup> Hom. viii. in Hexaem, p. 110.

tinue vain, and full of vicious affections. And therefore St. Chrysostom frequently beseeches his hearers, that when they come home, they would spend their time in ruminating upon what they had been taught, and conferring one with another about it: and thereby free themselves from all bad desires, and flee the snares of the devil. For when the devil, saith he, sees our minds solicitous about these Divine matters, and perpetually conversant in them, he dares not approach us; but flees away before the face of a more powerful Spirit working in us.

Now all this that hath been said, doth not come up to the primitive strictness; but it approaches something near unto it: and is a great mortification of sensual nature; which delights in company and merry meetings, in feasts and jollity, in sport and plays, in laughter, and all manner of mirth and pleasure. Which we ought to lay aside and deny ourselves at this season; that we may fulfil the Apostolical precept, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into

mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”<sup>6</sup>

Let the reader cast his eyes back to the latter end of the seventh chapter of this book: and when he hath perused it again, consider with himself what he hath to do. Especially in the great week of Lent (as they anciently called the week just before Easter) which had that name given it, saith the great man before mentioned,<sup>7</sup> “because in it, certain great and unspeakable benefits were bestowed upon us. There was an end put in this week, to the long continued war; death was extinguished; the curse was taken away; the tyranny of the devil dissolved, and he himself disarmed; God reconciled to mankind; heaven made enterable; men associated with angels; things distant enjoined; the partition-wall taken down; the inclosure laid open; the God of Peace pacified all things, both in heaven and in earth. And therefore we call it the Great Week; because the Lord graciously conferred

6 James iv. 9, 10.

7 St. Chrysos. Hom. xxx. in Genes.

on us such a multitude of gifts therein. For which reason many both enlarge their fasting, and are remarkable for watchings, and holy pernoctations, and alms: showing by their deeds the honour they have for this week. For if our Lord freely bestowed such great benefits upon us therein; how can we think it decent in us, not then to make a show of all possible reverence and honour? For even kings themselves declare, in what admiration they have those venerable days; by commanding a vacation to all those who manage civil affairs; by shutting up the doors of the courts of judgment; and requiring a cessation of all strife and contention: that men may have nothing to do, but to apply themselves to the right performance of spiritual offices; with the greatest quietness, and tranquillity. And more than this, they honour these days with another liberality; loosing the bonds of prisoners, and letting them go free; that, as far as human power reaches, they may imitate their Lord. For as He set us at liberty, when we were fast tied and bound with the chains of

our sins, and gave us the enjoyment also of innumerable good things, so we in like manner, ought, the best we can, to be imitators of this loving-kindness of the Lord."

"You see, how every one of us should show in all things, the reverence and the honour, which is becoming those days, which were the procurers of so many and such good things. And therefore now, if ever, let me entreat you to expel all worldly thoughts; and to keep the eye of your mind clear, and vigilant. Now is the time to fast more strictly; to make more earnest prayers; to be more exact and large in confession of sins; to be diligent in all the actions of piety; to give alms more liberally; to exercise the strictest patience, forbearance, meekness, and all other virtue: that coming with these accomplishments unto Easter-day, we may partake of the bounty of the Lord."

THE END.



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