



A NEW TREATISE

OF THE

DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN
TOWARDS GOD

BEING AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THE
ORIGINAL TREATISE

WRITTEN BY THE

BLESSED J. B. DE LA SALLE

FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

THE CHAPTERS AND ARTICLES ARE FOLLOWED BY HISTORICAL
EXAMPLES RELATING TO THE TRUTHS
CONTAINED THEREIN

BY F. P. B.

Authorized by the Council of Public Instruction and approved by
His Grace the Archbishop of Paris, by His Grace
the Archbishop of Tours &c.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

APPROVED BY HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF MONTREAL



MONTREAL

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A NEW TREATISE
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VEN. DE LA SALLE

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By F. P. B.

AUTHORIZED BY THE COUNCIL OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
AND APPROVED BY HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS
BY HIS GRACE THE ABP. OF TOURS
&c., &c., &c.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

APPROVED BY HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF MONTREAL

MONTREAL
44 COTE STREET, 44.

1869 287

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the year 1869, by B. E. GAGNON, in the office of the Minister
of Agriculture.

APPROBATION

DE MGR. L'ARCHEVEQUE DE PARIS.

HYACINTHE LOUIS DE QUELEN, par la miséricorde divine et la grâce du Saint-Siège apostolique. Archevêque de Paris, etc.

Nous avons autorisé et autorisons par ces présentes la publication d'un livre de format in-12, ayant pour titre : NOUVEAU TRAITÉ DES DEVOIRS DU CHRÉTIEN ENVERS DIEU, ETC., de l'imprimerie de Poussielgue, à Paris. Cet ouvrage, qui a été soumis à notre examen, nous a paru propre à faire bien connaître, aimer, et pratiquer les principaux devoirs de la vie chrétienne, et à préruiner les jeunes gens, contre les pièges tendus de tous côtés à l'innocence.

Donné à Paris, sous le seing de notre vicaire général, le scéau de nos armes et le contre-seing de notre secrétaire, le dix-huit octobre mil huit cent trente-sept.

J. LE SURRE,
Vicaire Général.

Par mandement de Monseigneur l'Archevêque de Paris

MOLINIER,
Chanoine Secrétaire

APPROBATION OF THE ENGLISH EDITION

BY

HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF MONTREAL.

We have examined the *NEW TREATISE OF THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN TOWARDS GOD*, and finding it conformable to the teaching of the holy Church, we joyfully authorize its publication.

The fact that the work has received the approbation of several of the higher Ecclesiastical Authorities of France, and has passed through twenty-six editions, excludes the necessity of our eulogizing its excellence.

Given at our Episcopal Residence this 2nd of January,
A. D. 1869.

+ IG., BISHOP OF MONTREAL.

PREFACE.

WHAT AM I? WHAT SHALL BECOME OF ME?

Questions so serious and so important that the truly wise and prudent will never treat them inconsiderately, fully convinced that errors on matters of so vital a nature may become most fatal and may be followed by irreparable consequences.

The idea of our existence and that of God are so intimately connected that we can not reflect on the former without being strongly impressed by the latter. Nothing exists but by HIM who is, and who is of HIMSELF. It is in Him that we have being, life, and reason. He has created us by his almighty power; He preserves us in his unbounded goodness; He governs us by his beneficent providence. It is, consequently, a stringent duty incumbent on us all to render Him the sincere homage of our worship; his pre-eminent existence demands it. A God, a religion, a rational being,—the latter can not exist without the former. The idea of religion is as natural to man as that of God himself; the child on his mother's knee, receives its impression with docility; the young man embarking on the stormy sea of the world, acknowledges it as his unvarying compass; and the man bowed under the weight of years, finds his consolation in its salutary precepts. Let the furious tempest of the

passions be calmed, and all men will be found marshalled beneath the standard of Religion.

This Treatise, as shall be seen, is an exposition of the *truths* which a Christian must believe; of the *duties* he is obliged to practise; and of the *means* he has in his power to obtain the grace to persevere in virtue and to attain the end for which he has been created. Historical examples and sundry questions are appended to its several divisions. These latter, if judiciously used, will stimulate the attention of the pupils, accustom them to reflect on what they read, and engrave more indelibly on their memory that science which leads to eternal bliss, and compared with which the wisdom of this world is nothing but ignorance and folly.

An Epitome on Christian Politeness, principally from the VEN. DE LA SALLE'S "CIVILITÉ CHRÉTIENNE," is also appended to the "DUTIES." The limited space does not allow its embracing numerous matters to which attention might profitably be drawn; but sufficient, it is hoped, has been said to induce those for whom it is intended, to behave with decorum in society, and to render their daily actions worthy their exalted character and agreeable to Him to whom even the minutest of **them** should be consecrated.

MONTREAL, Dec. 8th, 1868.

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THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN.

INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION—ITS NECESSITY, AND THE OBLIGATION OF STUDYING IT.

The existence of the universe, and that ineffable order, harmony, magnificence, and beauty, which pervade its every part, proclaim, in accents which can not be resisted, that there is an omniscient and omnipotent Being. Who can contemplate the starry heavens, the pleasing vicissitudes of the seasons, the variegated earth, the pathless ocean,—in a word, all nature, without believing in the existence of a Being who “is wise in heart, and mighty in strength....who doth things great, and incomprehensible, and wonderful, of which there is no number;” who “stretched out the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing? The pillars of heaven tremble, and dread at his beck. Lo! these things are said in part of his ways: and seeing we have heard scarce a little drop of his word, who shall be able to behold the thunder of his greatness?”*

That Being is God—who having created all things by a single act of his divine will, rules them according to the eternal laws of his infinite wisdom. Of all visible creatures, man alone is endowed with understanding and free-will; he alone is capable of knowing, willing, and loving; and God, who has conferred these faculties on him, strictly requires that they be employed in promoting the divine honor and glory.

* Job, ix, 4, 6, 8, 10, and xxvi, 7, 11, 14.

These truths, which are obvious to the most untutored plebeian, as well as to the proud philosopher, prove convincingly the necessity of a religion. It were vain to imagine that God is too great, too elevated, to take an interest in the honor rendered Him by man. God, it is true, needs not our homage; but being infinitely just, He requires what is conformable to reason and good order; now, what can be more consonant with both, than that the creature honor his Creator, and render Him a grateful and affectionate service?

Can a father dispense his children from the love and obedience which they owe him? God is our Father. His infinite goodness demands the willing tribute of our gratitude; his omnipotence, our service; but the endearing quality of Father, our respect, veneration, and love. All the advantages and blessings, whether of nature or grace, with which He enriches us, come from his liberal hand; and He has others yet in reserve, of which the Scripture speaks in the following terms:—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."* Is it not, then, with justice, that God exacts from us the most heartfelt love, the most religious worship?

This worship ought to be internal, comprehending all the powers of the soul; external, that the body may concur with the soul in worshipping God; and public, that man, destined for society, may, in concert, magnify and adore Him who has created all.

Without a settled form of worship, religion could not long subsist among men, since they require the aid of mutual edification to stimulate one another to the practice of their duties. Hence, men have, from the beginning, been accustomed to assemble for divine worship, and we, everywhere, find the Deity adored in the name of all the people.

The same light which discovers to man the existence of a Supreme Being, on whom he is entirely dependant, reveals to him also his obligation of paying Him divine honor. The form of divine worship, although differing

* 1 Cor., ii. 9.

in different nations, has, in principle, been everywhere the same,—namely, the necessity of honoring the Supreme Being—the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe.

To believe in the existence of God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the rewards and punishments of a future life, and yet, to live as if one did not believe in them, is an inconsistency which can spring only from the extreme of folly, ignorance, or licentiousness.

The most formidable enemies of religion are, blindness of mind and depravity of heart. Were religion better known, unbelievers would be fewer; and there would be none, if men were free from all criminal passions. But neither the darkness of error in the mind, nor the violence of passion in the heart, can disturb the reality of that whose existence is antecedent to, and independent of, the one and the other. Now, the universe, with all it comprises, the unanimous consent of nations, and the consciousness of every individual, are so many striking evidences bearing testimony to this fundamental dogma—the existence of God. The three powers of the soul, the memory, the understanding, and the will, are so many irrefragable proofs of its spirituality, and, consequently, of its immortality. Such being the case, how unaccountable is the stupid indifference and fatal insensibility of those who, without either precaution or fear, advance with rapid strides towards that final term—the hour of death, in which shall be decided their eternal lot!

Of the knowledge of the whole circle of the sciences, Religion is the most important for man. In prosperity, it moderates his joy; in adversity, it sustains his drooping spirits. It reminds him that time is nothing, that eternity is the great all. It secures the tranquillity of states, by making him obedient to the established authorities, and that not so much through fear, as through a motive of duty. It forms the clement prince, the equitable magistrate, the faithful subject, the just and considerate master, the trusty and obedient servant, the steadfast friend. It forbids not only the stealing of another's goods, but even the unjust desire of them: and further, it commands us to share

our substance with our poorer fellow-creatures, so that our abundance may supply their want. It not only condemns murder and revenge, but enjoins us to love our enemies, to forgive injuries, to do good to them that hate us, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that persecute and calumniate us.* Struck with the sublimity of this doctrine, Montesquieu cries out,—“Astonishing fact! that religion, which seems designed for another world, should, notwithstanding, constitute man’s happiness in this.” Even the impious and infamous Voltaire acknowledges that “society, without religion, would be a den of ferocious beasts.”

Nothing, therefore, is more important for man than the study of religion: religion itself makes this study imperative on us. It requires that we study its precepts; and, while it enjoins an implicit faith in its dogmas, it ordains that we be able to give an account of the faith that is in us. Unhappy they, who, blaspheming what they know not, dare to decry as popular prejudice, truths the most certain and most worthy of respect; truths which the most gifted have adopted, after careful investigation, heedless of the sacrifices and consequences which their adhesion would necessarily entail.

You who are about to enter the world, be ever mindful of the precepts of the Church; be faithful to your duties, and do not suffer yourselves to be drawn aside from the path of rectitude and virtue, though the impious and indifferent should scoff at your generous and noble fidelity to the commands of God and his Church.

Read such books as will instruct you thoroughly in the truths of religion: the better you are instructed, the firmer will be your faith; the more you study religion, the more impressed shall you be with its divine beauty and heavenly unction. Be not dazzled by the vain sophistries of the infidel: neither accept blasphemy for reason, nor raillery for proof. Shun bad company, for “evil communications corrupt good manners!” † “Decline from evil, and do

* Luke, vi, 35, and Matt., v, 44.

† 1 Cor., xv, 33.

good;” * — thus shall you, to the end, preserve, pure and unsullied, the precious treasure of faith.

If, however, you have had the misfortune of straying from your duty, return without delay to Him who, with outstretched arms, awaits you, and who never rejects those that seek Him with a contrite and humble heart : sacrifice not, dear youth, your eternal interests at the shrine of vile and contemptible human respect.

An unhappy Christian, having nothing of Christianity but Baptism, and who had either never learned his catechism, or had forgotten it, made it his particular request (doubtless from a sentiment of humility — the fruit of a sincere conversion), that the following epitaph should be engraved on his tombstone : — “ Here lies a fool, who departed this world without ever having sought to know why he had been sent into it. ” — CATECHISM OF THE CHURCHES OF FRANCE

A distinguished officer† in the United States’ Army, who passed for an atheist, had a daughter dangerously ill. The poor girl had, apparently, but few moments to live. She called for her father, and, clasping his hand in hers, said in accents the most touching : “ Dearest father, I am about to expire ; tell me, then, I beseech you, whether I am to believe what I have so frequently heard you affirm, that there is neither a God, a Heaven, nor a hell ; or to believe the consoling truths of the Catechism, which I have learned from the lips of my beloved mother.” The officer, struck with amazement at these words, remained for some moments in melancholy silence. At length, leaning over the bed of his dying child, he said in a voice broken with sobs : “ My daughter, my own darling daughter, believe that alone which thy mother has taught thee.” The astonishment of the bystanders, many of whom were infidels, may be easily imagined. One of them, who had long since abjured his religion, having been asked

* 1 Peter, iii, 11.

† Colonel E. Allen, the hero of Ticonderoga.

what he thought of the matter, gravely replied that it was more agreeable to live according to his new religion. but much safer to die in the old. Such is the idea the impious themselves form of religion at the dreadful hour of death.
—SCHMIDT ET BÉLET.

EXERCISES. — 1. What do the existence of the universe and the inef-
fable order that pervades it, proclaim? — 2. What does Job say of the
existence of this omnipotent Being? — 3. Who is this Being? — 4. Are
all creatures capable of knowing, willing, and loving? — 5. Why has
God conferred these faculties on man? — 6. What do these truths
convincingly prove? — 7. Do the greatness and elevation of God ren-
der Him indifferent to the homage which we owe Him? — 8. Does He
require our homage? — 9. What do the perfections of God require of
us? — 10. What does St. Paul say of the blessings which God has in
reserve for those who love and serve Him? — 11. What are the condi-
tions of the worship which we owe God? — 12. Why ought it to be inter-
nal? — 13. Why, external? — 14. Why, public? — 15. Why is a settled
form of worship necessary? — 16. Has public worship always been in
use? — 17. To what must we attribute the inconsistency of persons,
who, believing in the existence of God, live as though they had neither
rewards nor punishments to expect? — 18. What are the most formi-
dable enemies of religion? — 19. What do the three powers of the soul
prove? — 20. In the circle of the sciences, what knowledge is the most
important for man? — 21. What are its advantages? — 22. What does
Montesquieu say of the benefits of religion? — 23. Cite the words of
Voltaire on the necessity of religion. — 24. Repeat the principal coun-
sels which young persons, who desire to preserve their faith, should
follow when about to enter the world.

THE
DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN.

BOOK FIRST.
ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD.

PART FIRST.
OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.
OF THE CREED, WHICH IS AN ABRIDGMENT OF THE
TRUTHS OF FAITH.

SECTION I.

Of the Apostles' Creed in general.

It was necessary that the faithful should possess a formula, or profession of faith, which would be concise, simple, easy of retention, and the same throughout the world. To secure this desirable object, the Apostles, it is believed, before they separated to preach the Gospel, drew up the Symbol which bears their name, and which tradition has constantly attributed to them.

The word *symbol* signifies sign, or abridgment: that name has been given to this formula, because the profession of faith, which is made in reciting it, distinguishes Christians from unbelievers: and because it contains, in an abridged form, the truths which a Christian, in order to be saved, is bound to believe.

The Symbol, or Apostles' Creed, consists of twelve articles, and is divided into three principal parts.* The first part consists of the first article, and speaks of God the Father, and of the Creation of the world. The second part com-

* In the imperial library of Vienna, a very ancient Greek manuscript is said to exist, containing the Symbol of the Apostles, divided into twelve articles, with the name of each of the Apostles who composed them.—TEIGNOT.

prehends the next six articles, and treats of the Son of God, the Redemption of man, and the General Judgment. The third part comprises the last five articles, and professes our belief in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of sins, the General Resurrection, and the Rewards and Punishments of a future life. In reciting the Apostles' Creed, we produce as many acts of faith as there are truths contained in it. We should, therefore, accustom ourselves to repeat it frequently, but particularly on rising in the morning, to testify to God that we wish to live in a Christian manner during the day; and at night, before going to rest, in order to dispose ourselves to die in the faith of the Church, should death surprise us in our sleep. The Church ordains that all the faithful commit it to memory; and fathers and mothers are indispensably obliged to teach it to their children.

A tyrant, who, by threats and promises, had endeavored to induce his Christian subjects to renounce their faith, having asked some whom he had arraigned, what was their belief, one of the number replied,—“This is our profession of faith,—‘I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,’” &c.—which he recited to the end with a loud and firm voice.—*LASATISSE.*

Christians, while suffering the most excruciating tortures, inflicted on them by their cruel persecutors, in the hope of forcing them thereby to renounce their faith, have been heard to exclaim: “I believe”; — “I am a Christian;” — “Death, in any form, rather than apostacy.”—*TEIGNOT.*

EXERCISES. --- 1. What is the Apostles' Creed? — 2. When did the Apostles compose it? — 3. What does the word *SYMBOL* or *CREED* signify? — 4. Why is it so called? — 5. How many principal parts does it contain? — 6. How many articles? — 7. Of what does the first part consist? — 8. What does the second part comprehend? — 9. What does the third part comprise? — 10. What do we produce in reciting the Creed? — 11. When in particular should we repeat it? — 12. What does the Church ordain on this subject?

SECTION II.

ARTICLE I.—“ I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,
CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.”

The Necessity of Revelation.

Man's first and chief concern is to know the end for which he has been placed in this world, and that a state of never-ending happiness or misery awaits him in the world to come, according as his works in this, shall have been good or evil. But his understanding being extremely limited, and, consequently, his conception of spiritual things very imperfect, it behooves him to have recourse to that knowledge of them, which God himself has been pleased to reveal.

Of the truths thus revealed, some are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and others have come down to us by tradition. The Scriptures are divided into the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament comprises all the sacred writings from the time of Moses to the coming of our Divine Redeemer; the New, those which were written by some of the Apostles and first Disciples.

All these books were written by divine inspiration, and their authenticity is incontrovertible. That they were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, that they have been preserved with religious veneration, and have come down to us by a regular and uninterrupted tradition, are facts which can not be called in question. From the period of their sojourn in the desert, the Hebrew people had the books of Moses in their hands; they read them every day; parents transmitted the knowledge of them to their children as a most precious inheritance; the original was religiously preserved in the tabernacle, and the words, nay, even the very letters, were numbered. It would, therefore, have been impossible to make the slightest change in the sacred writings, without evoking the most strenuous opposition on the part of those who, for conscience' sake, were deeply interested in the preservation of their original integrity.

The Pentateuch, which comprehends the first five books of the Old Testament, has always been attributed to Moses by an entire people, whose religion, customs, and civil constitution, were founded on the truths and maxims embodied therein. The other books of the Old Testament are equally authentic; and so perfect is their correspondence throughout, that the facts mentioned by those who wrote the last, necessarily suppose the events recorded by those who had preceded them. The writers of these holy books proved their divine mission by a succession of the most stupendous miracles, and by prophecies which have been literally fulfilled. They were, therefore, the ambassadors of God.

The miracles which attest the authenticity of the Scriptures were so palpably evident, that it was impossible to be deceived in their regard. A whole kingdom is struck with ten successive plagues; — the sea opens, leaving to the Israelites a dry passage, and closes again, to the utter destruction of Pharaoh, and his entire army; — an immense multitude are fed for forty years in the desert with manna from Heaven, and their thirst quenched with water from the flinty rock; — they are protected from the scorching rays of the sun by a cloud during the day, and enlightened by a pillar of fire during the night;* — the Jordan yields a dry passage to Joshua and his people, and the course of the sun is interrupted to give them time to complete their victory; † — an army of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men are struck dead in one night under the ramparts of Jerusalem: ‡ these, and a thousand similar prodigies, many of which were attested by solemn festivals, instituted expressly to perpetuate their remembrance, could not be unknown to the most ignorant, nor disbelieved by the most incredulous. So convinced, indeed, were the Hebrew people of their reality, that they readily embraced the law which was given them, notwithstanding its numerous and rigorous observances, and the severe

* Exodus, xiv, xv, xvi. † Josue, iii, 17, and x, 13

‡ 4 Kings, xix, 35.

chastisements it decree dagainst those who should dare to violate it.

The proof resulting from the prophecies is no less convincing. Here we see a number of inspired men, who speak without uncertainty, hesitation, or doubt; but declare, confidently and publicly, that such and such events will certainly happen at the time, in the place, and in the manner which they specify. And what events? The most particular, the most important, and, at the time of their prediction, apparently, the most improbable. Such were, the captivity of the Jewish people in Babylon, which was to be the consequence of the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, then in a flourishing condition; the precise term of seventy years, marked out as the duration of the Babylonian captivity; the glorious return of that people to their own country, in the reign of Cyrus, their liberator, who was described and called by his name more than two hundred years before his birth; the succession and order of the four great empires, two of which, Persia and Greece, were expressly named, although they were, at the time of the prediction, confined to a mere corner of the earth, and divided into numerous petty states and kingdoms. How did the Prophets thus penetrate futurity? Who could discover to them events so remote and so improbable? **who**, but He who is the Master of time, and who regulates all things by his eternal decrees? Hence, the sacred penmen have ever been regarded as God's ministers and ambassadors, and their writings as the revealed word of Truth itself.

The authority of the *New Testament* rests on the same foundation as that of the *Old*, and is equally incontrovertible. The *New Testament* contains the history of the life, miracles, and doctrine of the Son of God, written by his Disciples—all contemporary authors—whose testimony is uniform, and who relate only what they had heard and seen. From the beginning of Christianity, these books have been cited; they were even transcribed by the great men who lived in the time of the Apostles; nor was their authenticity ever questioned even by those early enemies of the

Christian faith—Julian, Celsus, and Porphyry ; although at the period in which they lived, they could easily have ascertained whether any rational doubt of that authenticity had previously existed.

The Church has had, at all times, a profound veneration for these sacred books; she has caused them to be read in her religious assemblies ; she has always regarded them as the work of the Holy Ghost ; as the word of God : and has always taught that to add to or take from them, would be impiety and sacrilege. But, if these books are authentic and of divine authority, the facts contained in them must all be true ; and if these facts are certain, then it is true to assert that God himself has spoken to man. We should, therefore, consider every doctrine contrary to that revealed by God, as illusion, deceit, and error, and should oppose his sacred word to the daring licentiousness of impiety and incredulity. We should never forget, that, if our faith ought to be reasonable, by an examination of the reality of the facts on which it is founded, it can not be too humble, by our entire submission to the truths which it reveals, and to the expositions of them given by the Church, “ the pillar and ground of truth.”*

A number of persons waited on a certain philosopher, and thus addressed him : “ We are deputed to beg that you inform us clearly, who is God.” He replied, “ I will consider the subject ; call on me in eight days.” The eight days having elapsed, they returned, but the philosopher required eight days more to frame his answer. These being expired, they again presented themselves, but were told to call in eight days more. Weary of hearing the same reply, and in precisely the same terms, they asked him how long he would continue telling them to call in eight days. “ So long,” replied he, “ as you continue to put the same question, I must return the same answer. I know well that there is a God ; but who, or what He is, I know not, nor shall I ever be able to tell you.”

Who can teach what God is but God himself ? St. Augus

* 1 Tim., iii, 15.

time, before his conversion, went to the church as often as his occupations would permit, and never failed on Sundays to hear the sermons of St. Ambrose, who was then Bishop of Milan. "They were," says he, "excellent explanations of the word of truth; and whilst I opened my heart to the eloquence of his words, the truth entered by degrees." After his conversion, he says, "Oh! how much did I weep in hearing thy hymns and canticles, being exceedingly moved by the voices of thy harmonious Church! Their enchanting sounds charmed my ears, as thy truth distilled into my heart, whence the affection of devotion arose, and from my eyes flowed sweet tears, in which I found much comfort."*

EXERCISES. — 1. What is man's first and chief concern? — 2. Where are these revealed truths to be found? — 3. How are the Scriptures divided? — 4. What is comprised in the Old Testament? — 5. What, in the New? — 6. How were these books written, and what is said of their authenticity? — 7. What facts, respecting these books, cannot be questioned? — 8. To whom is the Pentateuch attributed? — 9. How did the writers of the Old Testament prove their divine mission? — 10. Name some of the miracles. — 11. Name some of the prophecies. — 12. On what does the authority of the New Testament rest? — 13. Of what does it treat? — 14. How has the Church always regarded these books? — 15. How should we consider all doctrines contrary to divine revelation?

SECTION III.

"I BELIEVE IN GOD."

Of the Existence of God.

This truth—*there is a God*—presents itself, as it were, naturally to the mind. A single glance, a moment's reflection, is sufficient to convince us of its reality. Every object in nature, the least as well as the greatest, is a sensible proof of God's existence.

Behold the magnificent canopy of the heavens! Who has created this immense vault? Who has suspended all these glorious orbs;—this sun which diffuses everywhere its light and heat—this moon, these stars, which shine in the

* Confess., lib. vii, c. 6.

firmament during the night, and which perform their revolutions with a regularity so truly admirable ?

If now we look down upon the earth, and contemplate the countless multitudes of animals which inhabit it ; the amazing variety of trees, plants, and fruits, with which it is covered ; the myriads of fishes which the sea contains within its bosom ; shall we not exclaim,—who, but God alone, could be the author of so many wonders ? To attribute them to chance, would be the climax of absurdity. On seeing a beautiful palace, we instantly judge that a skilful architect has planned and built it ; and on beholding a fine picture, we doubt not that an excellent artist has designed and painted it. And should any one dare tell us that the building and the painting are the effects of chance ; that the stones, &c., of the former, happened to shape, polish, and adjust themselves ; and that the colors of the latter, by some accident, mixed and arranged themselves on the canvass, and thus formed the correct and graceful figures which we so much admire ; would we not pronounce our informant a madman ? How, then, should we characterize him, who, for an instant, could imagine that the universe has been the result of a similar process ?

In fine, contemplating ourselves, we see the human body composed of a multitude of muscles, members, and organs, arranged with amazing regularity ; and, throughout the whole, we perceive evidence of a marked design, and proof that He who called man into existence, wished to give, in his person, a manifest indication of his infinite wisdom, since God alone could have produced a work so admirable ! But we have a soul as well as a body. This soul is not formed of matter ; for matter is not capable of thought. The soul is, then, a spirit. It is united to the body ; and so intimate is this union, that when the body is in health, a sweet joy diffuses itself through the soul ; and when the body suffers from sickness, the soul sympathizes in its sufferings. Who, but God, could thus unite two such opposite substances, and establish between them so admirable a correspondence ?

The feelings of joy and sadness which we experience, are a further proof of God's existence. If these feelings depended on ourselves, or if we could possess or banish them at pleasure, we would always be joyous—never sorrowful. We have, then, a sovereign and almighty Master, on whom we depend, and who disposes of us at his good pleasure. This supreme Master is God. Hence, the exclamation—"My God!" which escapes us in any unforeseen calamity or danger—an exclamation which is not the effect of reflection, but the testimony of a soul "naturally Christian," as is remarked by the famous, but unfortunate, Tertullian.

It is, then, true, that we bear within us the impress of the Divinity, traced in indelible characters; and hence, there has never been a nation, how savage or barbarous soever, which did not acknowledge the existence of a supreme Being. Many nations have been discovered destitute of the arts and sciences;—not one that had not a *God*. In their choice, many were, certainly, mistaken; but all felt the necessity of acknowledging a supreme Power. This universal consent of mankind, of all countries, and of all times, and among people differing so much from one another in genius and manners, could not be the effect of any arbitrary convention: it can only be the effect of a light which shines on all mankind—a light proceeding from God, which even the most simple-minded cannot misunderstand.

"The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of his hands."* Who else could order the sun to come forth, and preside over the day; or the moon to appear, and rule over the night? † All creatures proclaim aloud that they did not make themselves, that it was God alone who made them. Who but God could cause the plants to germinate and increase in the bosom of the earth? Who else could regulate the exact succession of day and night, and fix the invariable order of the seasons? Every thing around us proclaims the existence of God.

* Psalm xvii, 2.

† Gen., i.

A young libertine, whose levity of mind corresponded with that of his manners, presented himself to M. Oudin, a learned and pious ecclesiastic, and impudently said, "I feel much pleasure, sir, in informing you that I am an atheist." At these words, the man of God recoiled with horror; then, putting on his spectacles, he steadfastly gazed at the silly fop, who, after a few moments, demanded why he stared him. "I gaze," he replied, "upon the strange being called an atheist, having never seen one till now." Disconcerted at this answer, the atheistical youth hastily withdrew.—MERAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. Are deep researches requisite to convince us of the existence of God?—2. What are the external proofs of the existence of God?—3. Can the creation of the world and the numberless beauties it contains, be attributed to chance?—4. Can the admirable formation of the human body be the result of chance?—5. Is not a proof of the existence of God found in the soul?—6. Have there ever been on earth nations that rejected the existence of God?—7. Of what is this universal consent of nations the effect?

SECTION IV.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD, &C.”

Of the Unity of God.

Faith and reason, which teach us that there is a God, teach us also that there is but one, and that there cannot be more. God, being sovereignly great, must be *one*: if He had an equal, He would cease to be supreme. All his perfections prove his Unity. There can be but one immense Being, who fills all places, and in whom all things live, move, and have their being. There can be but one infinitely perfect Being, who possesses in himself all possible perfections, and from whom all the perfections of his creatures flow. The Divine Being cannot have an equal, because He possesses in himself the plenitude of infinite majesty.

That a truth so evident should formerly have been unknown, and that people, otherwise enlightened, should have adored a plurality of gods, is, doubtless, a subject of astonishment. This gross ignorance was a consequence of

sin. When God created man, He manifested himself to him, and man, from that moment, knew clearly that there was but one Supreme Being, who created all things, and on whom they were all dependant. Man transmitted to his posterity this pure and holy religion, which was for some time preserved amongst them. This tradition was so conformable to reason, that one should think it could never be obscured nor forgotten; but religion demanded sacrifice, and the corruption of nature was every day assuming a new and more powerful empire. In proportion as men removed from the origin of things, the greater part forgot the lessons which they had received from their forefathers; the idea of God was confounded with that of the creation; they adored every object in which they discovered any extraordinary power, or from which they believed they had anything to hope or fear. The stars were the first objects of this impious worship; kings, conquerors, and philosophers, soon after received divine honors. Beasts and reptiles next became objects of adoration. At length, the greater part of mankind regarded everything as God but God himself, and even adored the works of their own hands. They fancied they could confine the Divine Spirit in a statue, and they so far forgot that God had made them, as even to imagine that they could make a God. Every nation had its particular deities, some of which presided in heaven, others in the sea and in the rivers, others in hell; and so great was the corruption which reigned amongst men, that they deified vices and passions, and erected altars in their honor.

Nor was this excess of wickedness and blindness peculiar to savage and barbarous nations; the most polished nations of antiquity—the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans—were no less chargeable with it. These nations, though unsurpassed in civilization and enlightenment, were, in matters of religion, as blind as the most barbarous and illiterate. Even their orators, poets, historians, and sages, were profoundly ignorant of the nature of the Divinity; and what would appear incredible, if facts did not attest it, the prevailing notions on this head were not only the most absurd, but likewise the most deeply rooted and incorrigible. Some

of their philosophers, it is true, by much reasoning and deep reflection, discovered the unity of God, but they never dared teach this doctrine in public.

Men would never have gone forth from the darkness of idolatry, had not a supernatural light come to the assistance of reason, and had God himself not spoken to man, and made known who He is, and how He should be honored. Had not the Lord deigned to enlighten us also, we, too, would now be buried in this frightful darkness; but thanks to his infinite goodness, the first lessons given us in our childhood, taught us more than was known by the wisest pagans of antiquity.

Epictetus being asked who God is, replied, "Were I capable of declaring what God is, God would not be what He is, and I should be God,—for God alone can comprehend himself."

EXERCISES. — 1. What do faith and reason teach us concerning God? — 2. How do the perfections of God prove his Unity? — 3. What has given rise to idolatry? — 4. What creatures first attracted man's adoration? — 5. Was this excess of wickedness and blindness limited to savage and barbarous nations? — 6. To whom do we owe our deliverance from this frightful darkness?

SECTION V.

"I BELIEVE IN GOD, &c."

Of the Perfections of God.

God is so great, and our understanding is so limited, that it is impossible for us to conceive what He really is. The knowledge of Him, which faith and reason communicate, is naturally imperfect, but still quite sufficient for us while we are in this life. Nothing can give us a more exalted idea of God than what He says of himself: "I AM WHO AM;"*—that is, the *Being* by excellence, the First Cause of all, on whom alone everything else depends. From this

* Exodus, iii, 14.

idea of God, it follows, that He possesses, in an infinite degree, every possible perfection.

God is a Spirit,—that is, a pure Intelligence, without body, figure, or color: He is not like the objects which surround us, and which strike our senses; for everything which we see and touch is material; but an infinitely perfect being is immaterial. The angels and our souls are indeed spirits, but the knowledge of the angels, as well as ours, is limited and imperfect; that of God extends to every object in creation.

God is Eternal.—He existed before all things, for He made them all; He existed before all time—He never had a beginning, and never will have an end. Before anything was created, God existed in himself, and nothing existed but God alone.

God is Almighty.—He can do all things; He does all that He wills; by his single word all creatures came forth from nothing, and, if He pleased, He could create a thousand other worlds. "He," says the Apostle, "calleth the things that are not as those that are,"* and they immediately obey his voice. Nothing is impossible, nothing difficult to Him. The heavenly bodies are suspended in the firmament without any other support than his good pleasure; the sea respects his orders, and keeps within the limits which He has prescribed it. The fire, the air, the tempest, all nature is obedient to his laws. He covers the heavens with clouds, whence descend the fertilizing rain; and each succeeding year He presents to our admiring view the renovated aspect of universal nature.

God is Independent.—God is, or exists, from himself alone, and is the principle of all that is. He is the inexhaustible source of all good; and He distributes his gifts to whom He pleases. A Being sovereignly happy in himself, He has no need of creatures; and, absolute Master of all things, He has neither superior nor equal. We, on the contrary, live in a universal and continual dependance upon God. It is He who preserves and nourishes us. We can do nothing

* Rom., iv, 17.

whatever without his assistance, and were He to withdraw, for an instant, his sustaining arm, we should at once return to our original nothingness.

God is Unchangeable.—What He is, He always was, and always will be. “For I am the Lord, and I change not.”* Man is never in a fixed or permanent condition. His body subject to the revolutions of different periods of life, passes successively from strength to weakness, from health to sickness, from life to death. His will, either through his own inconstancy, or because he has discovered reasons for abandoning what he sought, or for seeking what he despised, is subject to perpetual change. “But Thou,” says the Psalmist, addressing the Almighty, “art always the selfsame, and thy years shall not fail:”† and St. James declares, that with “God there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.”‡

God is Infinite,—that is, his essence and his attributes are without limit. He possesses, in an unlimited degree, all possible perfections. God is not only good, but infinitely good; not only just, but infinitely just;—and thus might be characterized all his other perfections, of which the number is as unlimited as their greatness is unbounded.

God is Immense.—He is in Heaven, on earth, and in all places. It is He who animates all, who sustains all, who gives life and motion to every created being. He is in all things, or to say better, all things are in Him; his presence extends to the farthest bounds of the universe; He could create other worlds as well as this; and if created, they would all be confined within the extent of his immensity. It is, then, certain, that we are continually in God's presence; He hears all our words; He witnesses all our actions; He penetrates the inmost recesses of our heart; He knows well all our thoughts and all our desires. When we do evil, He is present and sees it. The thickest darkness does not conceal us from his sight; the darkest night is, with Him, as the brightest day. The proof of this truth is deeply engraven on our heart. Whence come those

* Malachy, iii, 6.

† Ps. ci, 27.

‡ James, i, 17.

remorses which agitate us in the commission of crime, though concealed from every human eye? Whence those lively and bitter reproaches with which conscience then assails us? In vain would the sinner endeavor to silence them; the piercing cry of this interior voice penetrates whatever opposes it; in vain would he fly from his own heart, and seek to avoid the confusion of these reproaches. Wherever he goes, he is filled with fear and covered with shame before this invisible censor, that continually reminds him of the turpitude of his crime, in order to induce him to detest it.

We should never forget that God is always with us, and that we are never alone; that, in the most retired place, in the deepest solitude, we have an invisible Witness, who accompanies us everywhere, and observes all our actions. This thought should restrain us from evil. The enemy of our salvation is weak, his efforts powerless, so long as we remember the presence of God. How could we dare to commit sin before his eyes? Who would have the temerity to do in his presence what he would not do in the presence of his father or master? This was the lesson which Tobias gave his son:—"My son," said he, "all the days of thy life, have God in thy mind."* It is also the counsel of St. Augustine: "If any one," he says, "would tempt you to sin, say to him: 'Find me a place in which God will not see me; but since there is no such place, speak to me no longer of sin; I am not sufficiently wicked to offend Him in his presence.'" This thought—*God sees me*—should sustain us against the attacks of the devil, give us strength and courage to resist them, and stimulate us to discharge our duties with the utmost fidelity.

God governs all things.—He takes care of all his creatures, and this care is called his *Providence*. Nothing happens in this world but by his order or permission. The good which happens is by his order. He approves it, He wills and commands it, and He rewards it. The evil which is committed happens not by his order. He forbids it, and will punish it; but He does not prevent it, because He will

* Tobias, iv. 6.

not constrain our liberty, and is sufficiently powerful to draw good from evil. God abandons not his creatures to chance after having created them. To govern them, after having deigned to create them, is not unworthy of his infinite majesty.

The providence of God watches over each individual, as well as over kingdoms and empires. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the order of your heavenly Father. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered,"* says our Lord. His bountiful providence annually covers the earth with crops, causes the trees to be laden with fruit, gives increase to plants, provides, with paternal care, for the various wants of his creatures, and nourishes even the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the animals which roam over the earth.

We must not, however, imagine, that God's care of his creatures is to Him a source of trouble, or that it disturbs, in the least, his unalterable repose. A king, who is occupied with the great affairs of his kingdom, cannot attend to the details of its minor concerns; for, so limited are the powers of the human mind, that he could not devote his attention to the care of the latter, without exposing himself to the manifest danger of neglecting the former. But with God all things are equally easy, and nothing can be difficult or embarrassing to Him.

From this principle, that there is a Providence, flow two important duties of man. The first is, that he should submit without reserve to the conduct of that Providence; adoring it in adversity, as well as in prosperity; in sickness and suffering, as well as in health and enjoyment. Our sentiments, then, should be, "as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord."† If He sometimes permits the good man to suffer want, while the impious is in a state of affluence, it is that He may exercise his virtue, and reward it munificently in the life to come,—knowing that the passing evils which we here endure will be the means of securing to us everlasting felicity. The second duty is, to confide in this Providence,

* Matt., x. 30.

† Job, i, 21.

and to expect, without inquietude, from the goodness of God, all that is necessary for this life and the life to come. "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labour not, neither do they spin: but I say to you, that not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith?"* Let us, therefore, adore divine Providence under all events; our lot cannot be in better hands. Never will so good a Father abandon his children, if they but confide in his paternal care.

We read in the Old Testament, that a virtuous young woman, named Susanna, was solicited to commit a grievous sin, and was threatened with an ignominious death in case she refused. Horrified at the thought of offending God, she raised her eyes in supplication to Heaven and then protested courageously that she would rather die than sin in the presence of her God. Being afterwards falsely accused before the people, in consequence of her resisting this temptation, God himself undertook her defence, and, by means of his prophet, Daniel, clearly established her innocence. Her wicked accusers were then put to the same kind of death to which they had nefariously condemned her. Thus, the remembrance of God's presence, which she had constantly preserved, was the cause of Susanna's heroic conduct in the hour of trial, and of her generous fidelity, to vindicate which, divine Providence thus miraculously interposed.

Canute, the Dane, king of England, one of the wisest and most powerful monarchs of his time, was an object of the most extravagant adulation—a tribute liberally paid even to the meanest and weakest princes—but which this religious sovereign held in abhorrence. Being one day on

* Matt., vi 26, 28, 29, 30.

the sea-shore, surrounded by a numerous retinue, some of them took occasion to extol his greatness, styling him—king of kings, and ruler of both sea and land. Canute, desirous of showing how conscious he was of the emptiness of the base compliment, and wishing to reprove their impiety, seated himself near the water's edge at the flowing of the tide, and commanded the foaming element not to approach his person, but to withdraw since he was lord even of the ocean! The sea, it may be easily believed, little heeded the monarch's mandate. It gained, as usual, upon the shore, and would soon have drenched and submerged the royal personage and his suite, had they not had the prudence to retire. "You see," said the king, smiling, "the impotence of your sovereign: learn, that supreme dominion is the attribute of God alone, who with a nod can raze the towering piles of human pride and ambition, and who alone can say to the ocean: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and thou shalt go no farther; and here shalt thou break thy swelling waves.'"^{*}

Whatever afflictions fell to the lot of the holy king and prophet, David, he never murmured or uttered the least complaint. On the contrary, he wished on all such occasions to acknowledge the goodness of God, and to proclaim his praises, knowing that everything comes from Him as from the source of all good. Thus was he disposed when pursued and persecuted by Saul, and long afterwards, when driven from his palace and from the regal city, by his unnatural son, Absalom, and when cursed and reviled by the ungrateful Semei.[†]

M. de Chantal having been mortally wounded by a friend, who mistook him for a deer, became that friend's consoler, and said to him,—“My dear friend, thy arrow had been pointed by the Most High before it left thy bow.”—LIFE OF ST. F. DE CHANTAL.

Madame de Sévigné, speaking of Marshal Turenne, says, “The cannon which killed this great man was loaded from

^{*} Job, xxxviii, 11.

[†] 2 Kings, xvi, 10.

all eternity:"—a thought as true as it is energetic—
LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

EXERCISES. — 1. Is it possible for us to conceive what God really is? — 2. What can communicate, at least imperfectly, the knowledge of God? — 3. What do you mean by saying that God is a spirit? — 4. Are not the angels and our souls spirits? — 5. Why do we say that God is eternal? — 6. Why, almighty? — 7. Why, independent? — 8. Why, unchangeable? — 9. Why, infinite? — 10. Why, immense? — 11. What means the providence of God? — 12. What two important duties flow from the principle that there is a Providence?

SECTION VI.

“ I BELIEVE IN GOD, &c.”

Of the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

Although God is but *one* in nature, yet there are in God three really distinct persons, called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This truth is called the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. God himself revealed it, in a sensible manner, at the baptism of Jesus Christ, when the Holy Ghost was seen descending upon him in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard acknowledging him publicly as his only Son: “Heaven was opened,” says the Evangelist, “and the Holy Ghost descended, in a bodily shape, as a dove, upon him; and a voice came from Heaven: ‘Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.’” * Jesus Christ himself clearly revealed it, when he commanded his Apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; showing that these three persons are equal to one another. This truth is confirmed by St. John, when he says, “There are three who give testimony in Heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” †

This mystery of the Blessed Trinity is the great object of our faith, and there is no one truth the remembrance of

* Luke, iii, 21, 22.

† 1 John, v, 7.

which religion so frequently recalls. All our prayers begin and end with the invocation of the three divine Persons. The sign of the cross, which is so frequently used in the ceremonies of the Church, and in the ordinary actions of Christians, is made in their name. Although we must not divide the divine nature, which is *one*, we must be careful not to confound the persons, which are really distinct. The Father is the same God as the Son, but not the same person; the Holy Ghost is the same God as the Father and the Son, but not the same person as either. The three divine Persons are not three Gods, because they have but one and the same divine nature; hence, they are equal to one another in all things; the one is not greater, wiser, or older than either of the others; they have all the same power, the same wisdom, the same eternity.

This incomprehensible truth is above human reason, not contrary to it, as some heretics assert. We do not say that there are three Gods in one God, but three persons in one God. Nor should we represent to ourselves the three persons in body and soul like ours; the three persons in God are purely spiritual. The first person is the Father; the second person is the Son, begotten of the Father from all eternity; the third person is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Such is the knowledge which God has been pleased to reveal of this sublime mystery. Man could not of himself have attained to this knowledge, but God, who is truth itself, and who can neither deceive nor be deceived, having revealed it to us, we believe it with undoubting faith, resting on the authority of his infallible word.

There is nothing more reasonable than that man should submit his reason to God's authority, for it is not in spiritual things alone that the weakness of man's understanding is seen. How many things are there in nature which he cannot comprehend, but which, nevertheless, are certain and indubitable! Can we conceive now a gram of wheat cast into the earth, produces a multitude of others; how a dry and apparently withered trunk sends forth such a variety of leaves and flowers, and such a profusion

of delicious fruits; with a thousand other wonders which nature daily presents to our view? When a learned astronomer speaks to his pupils of the immensity of the heavens, of the countless multitude of the heavenly bodies, of their bulk, of their distance, and, in fine, of the velocity and regularity of their motions; when he tells them, for instance, that the sun is 1,400,000 times as large as our earth, and that his distance from it is 95,000,000 of miles, they cannot comprehend what he tells them; but, conscious that they are yet only children, they believe all this on the word of a man in whose veracity they confide. When there is question of the nature of God, all men are but children. They will one day arrive at the plenitude of perfect age; their darkness will be dissipated, and they will see clearly what they can now neither penetrate nor comprehend. St. Augustine says, that "to wish to penetrate this mystery here below, is temerity; to believe it by the light of faith, is the fruit of piety; to contemplate it in the other life, is sovereign felicity."

The human soul is an illustrious image of the Trinity. Like the Father, it has being; like the Son, it has intelligence; and like the Holy Ghost, it has love. Like the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, it has in its being, intelligence, and love, one and the same happiness, one and the same life. Nothing can be taken from it, unless all be taken. Perfect in its life, understanding, and love, it understands what it is, and loves what it understands: its being and its operations are inseparable. Happy he who secures the happiness for which his immortal soul was created.

Moses, in his history of the creation, informs us, that before the formation of Adam, God said, "Let Us make man to our image and likeness."* The words, "God said," show the unity of the Godhead, "Let Us make," show the plurality of the Persons. And the Lord, in reproaching Adam for disobeying his just commands, ironically said, "Behold, Adam is become as one of Us, knowing good and evil."† Here it is evident, that God speaks to an equal,

* Gen., i, 26.

† Gen., iii, 22.

and from those words it is also evident, that God was speaking to his equal when He said, "Let Us make man to our image and likeness." The prophet David says, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth;"* and in these makes express mention of the three divine Persons: *the Lord*, who is the Father; *the Word of the Lord*, who is the Son; and *the Spirit of the Lord*, who is the Holy Ghost. Thus, it appears that the mystery of the Holy Trinity was intimated in the Old Law, though not so clearly taught as in the New; for, to teach it clearly, was reserved for Him who commanded his disciples to "go and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."†

Two men, blind from their birth, the one ignorant and impious, the other pious and well-instructed, conversing together, the former said to the latter—"How can there be three persons in one God, while each of the three persons is God, although there is but one God? I cannot understand how that can be, and think it very silly to believe what one cannot comprehend." "I firmly believe it," replied the other, and, in thus believing, am not foolish, but the contrary." "If you can prove that," said the impious man, "my cane—good and beautiful as it is—shall be yours." "And pray," said the good man, "how do you know that your cane is pretty? what can a blind man know of beauty? We, who are blind, can form no conception of colors. Who could make us comprehend the difference between red and yellow—green and blue? Are we, therefore, to deny that there are colors, and that there is a difference between them, until we can understand what constitutes that difference?" "Certainly not," replied the other, "we have so many reasons to believe the fact,—all men who are not blind assure us of 'ts truth." "And so," rejoined the good man, "men tell us that there are colors, and we believe them; but God

* Ps. xxxii, 6.

† Matt., xxviii, 19.

has revealed the mysteries of which we have just spoken, and yet, we will not believe Him! Have we not far more reason to believe the mysteries of our holy religion, than to believe in the existence of colors. The Catholic Church, which teaches us the mysteries of faith, has been divinely established—she will instruct you in them. Lead a life of faith, vivified by charity, till God shall call you out of this world; then you shall be no longer blind, but shall behold God face to face as He really is.”

EXERCISES.—1. What do you understand by the mystery of the Blessed Trinity?—2. When, and by whom, was this mystery revealed to us?—3. How is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity considered?—4. What recalls to our mind this fundamental dogma?—5. What should we know concerning this august mystery?—6. Though above our comprehension, is it reasonable to believe in it?—7. Have we in ourselves an image of the Blessed Trinity?

SECTION VII.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.”

Of the Creation.

The world which we inhabit is not eternal; it had a beginning. The book which gives the history of its creation is the most ancient in existence, and is, like all the sacred writings, most authentic and worthy of credit. “In the beginning,” says this inspired volume, “God created heaven and earth,”* that is—made all things. God has existed from all eternity, and nothing else than He alone could have been from eternity. In time, at the moment chosen by himself, He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, by a single act of his almighty will: “He spoke, and they were made: He commanded, and they were created” † If we transport ourselves, in spirit, back to the time of the creation, with what admiration shall we be filled, at seeing myriads of beautiful and perfect

* Gen., i, 1.

† Ps. cxlviii, 5.

creatures start into existence at the voice of God, that is, by his omnipotent will!

God employed six days in the work of the creation. He could as easily have accomplished it in a single instant; but He wished to show that He acts without constraint, and according to his good will and pleasure. On the first day He created the heavens and the earth. "And God said, 'Be light made:' and light was made."* On the second day He made the firmament—the immense vault which we call the heavens. "Let there be a firmament," said the Lord, "and it was so."† It did not then possess its present brilliancy, and was, as yet, like an immense pavilion, destitute of ornament—the sun and the stars not being yet created. On the third day God collected the waters together, and separated them from the land; He also commanded the earth to bring forth trees and plants, to each of which He imparted the wonderful property of reproducing others of the same species, by means of seeds. Thus, at the order of God, a dry and sterile surface became, in an instant, a delightful landscape, covered with smiling meadows, with fertile valleys, adorned with fruits and flowers, and with hills and mountains, crowned with stately forests.

On the fourth day God created the sun and moon, and adorned the firmament with a multitude of stars, which charm our sight and astonish our imagination. On the fifth day He created the birds and fishes, saying, "Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life, and the fowl that may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven:"‡ and presently the deep was filled with inmates, and the air with an innumerable variety of birds.

On the sixth day, "God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so done.'§ Thus were created the various animals which inhabit the earth, from the smallest worm, to the huge elephant; from the garden-bee, to the mountain-

* Gen., i, 3,

† Gen., i, 6, 7.

‡ Gen., i, 20.

§ Gen., i, 24

eagle; from the smallest reptile, to the largest serpent; from the minute animalculum that escapes the eye, to the enormous whale which, like an animated mountain, agitates the deep; in fine, from the meanest insect, to the most finished form in the animal creation. How admirably various are their conformation, their qualities, and their instincts! To some were given strength; to others, industry; and to all, the qualities necessary for fulfilling their respective destinies. All creatures being thus created, God resolved to give them a master, and created the first man, whom He called Adam.

The most illustrious of naturalists, the immortal Linnæus, after an extensive and profound study of nature, thus expresses himself:—

“I have seen pass by the shadow of the eternal God—the immense, Omnipotent, sovereignly Wise—and I have been stupified with wonder. I have followed his foot-prints on the universe, and, oh! what power, what intelligence, what fathomless perfection, are displayed in all his works, even to the least, and such as hardly have a being! I have observed that the existence of animals is founded on vegetables; that of vegetables, on minerals; that of minerals, on the earth; and that the earth is vivified by the sun, about which it continually revolves with unvarying regularity. I have contemplated the sun turning on its axis, like the other stars, and the assemblage of stars, whose number is incalculable, suspended and put in motion in boundless space, by the ineffable and primitive Mover—the Being of beings, the Cause of causes, the Author, Regulator, and Preserver of all things, and Monarch of the universe.”—SYSTEMA NATURE.

EXERCISES.—1. Of what does the first article of the Creed treat?—2. Has the world always existed?—3. What book gives the history of its creation?—4. Is this book worthy of belief?—5. How many days did God employ in the creation of the world?—6. Was it necessary that He should employ this time in its creation?—7. What did God create on the first day?—8. On the second?—9. On the third?—10. On the fourth?—11. On the fifth?—12. On the sixth?—13. How did He crown the creation of the world?

* See Chapter on Revelation, page 9

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ANGELS AND OF MEN.

Angels and men are the most perfect beings which God has created, because they alone possess understanding, are capable of knowing and loving their Creator, and are made to be eternally happy in the possession of Him.

SECTION I.

Of the Angels.

Although no mention is made of the Angels in the account of the creation, it is believed they were created on the first day, when God said, "Let there be light."* This is the opinion of St. Augustine. God, says the Scripture, made the Angels in Heaven, and created an innumerable multitude of them. The Angels are pure spirits, not destined, like our souls, to be united with bodies. The name *angel* signifies messenger, and the Holy Scripture furnishes a variety of examples, in which these blessed spirits have been deputed to men:—the Angel Gabriel to Zachary, and to the Blessed Virgin; Raphael to Tobias, &c Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, and a great number of other holy persons, have been favored with angelical visions. These blessed spirits are represented with wings, to show the promptitude with which they execute the orders of God.

The Angels were created with free-will; all could have remained faithful and could have merited the happiness for which they had been created; but the chief amongst them, Lucifer—so named, on account of the great splendor and beauty with which he had been adorned—forgot the duty he owed his Creator, and wished to become his equal. A great number of the heavenly spirits followed his example; but a still greater number followed that of the Archangel Michael,† who, placing himself at their head, overcame these rebellious spirits. "Michael," in Hebrew, signifies—Who is like unto God? Who so great, so powerful, so holy, or so just?

* Gen., i. 3.

† Rev., xii. 17.

These wicked spirits were cast into hell, where they shall endure the most terrific punishments for all eternity.

God, to give us an occasion of proving our love for Him, and of meriting a greater recompense, permits these spirits of darkness, who are also called devils, to tempt us to evil; but He, at the same time, gives us the graces necessary to resist their suggestions. We may prevent their attacks by prayer and vigilance, and overcome them by the grace which Jesus Christ has purchased for us by his sufferings and death. The angels who had remained faithful were confirmed in grace, and entered into the joy of the Lord, with which they will be eternally inebriated in the contemplation of his ineffable perfections.

There are three hierarchies of these blessed spirits, and in each hierarchy three different orders. The first hierarchy comprehends the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones; the second, the Dominations, the Virtues, and the Powers; the third, the Principalities, the Archangels, and the Angels. Their occupation, as we are taught by the Holy Scriptures, is to sing the praises of God, to adore Him, present our prayers to Him, and protect those who invoke their assistance. We should entertain great respect for all these blessed spirits, but in a particular manner for our Guardian Angel. We know from the words of Jesus Christ himself,* that the smallest child has one of these blessed spirits as his guardian and protector. What sweet consolation to be assured that we have always with us a protector, whom God has sent us from Heaven, who watches over us day and night, to prevent the angel of darkness doing us injury; and that we have in him a true friend, equally faithful, wise, enlightened, and powerful; a secure guide, filled with zeal, to direct us in the path which leads to Heaven? Why are we unmindful of what these Angels do for us? Should not the remembrance of it fill our heart with gratitude, confidence, and love, and prompt us to be docile to their inspirations, fervent in invoking their assistance, and faithful in imitating their example!

* Matt., xviii, 10.

After the return from the Babyionian captivity, the holy man Tobias, believing himself near death, advised his son to seek out a faithful guide who should conduct him to Ecbatana, where his kinsman, Gabelus, to whom he had lent a large sum of money, resided. The young Tobias going out, met, under the guise of a traveller, ready for a journey, the Angel Raphael, who instantly offered to conduct him safely. Arrived near Rages, the heavenly conductor informed him that the Almighty had destined him to be the husband of Sara, the daughter of his kinsman, Raguel. At this news, the young man was struck with terror, knowing that Sara had been the wife of seven husbands, each of whom had died the first night of their nuptials; but the angel assured him that no evil would happen to him if he obeyed his instructions. He did so, and everything occurred as the angel had predicted.

Gabelus was invited to the marriage, and paid Tobias the debt which he owed. In a few days the travellers commenced their journey homewards. On their return, the young Tobias first adored God, according to the instructions of his guide, and then approached his father, who was blind, and rubbed his eyes with the gall of "a monstrous fish" which "came up to devour him,"* when he went to wash his feet in the Tigris, and which the angel told him how he might destroy. No sooner had he anointed his father's eyes, than the good old man, to his great joy, recovered his sight. The Angel having fulfilled his commission, made known to the happy family who he was, and thus addressed Tobias: "The Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sara, thy son's wife, from the devil. For I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord. . . . When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord. And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." Seeing them seized with fear, he added sweetly, "Peace be to you; fear not;"† and then vanished

* Tobias, vi, 2.

† *Ibid.*, xii.

out of their sight. The services which the Angel Raphael thus rendered to young Tobias, are a figure of those which our Guardian Angels daily render us.

EXERCISES.—1. Name the most perfect beings that God has created. -- 2. Why are they the most perfect? -- 3. When were the Angels created? -- 4. What are Angels? -- 5. What does the word *angel* signify? -- 6. Did all the Angels remain faithful to God? -- 7. Why does God tolerate these spirits of darkness to tempt us? -- 8. Classify the Angels. -- 9. What do the Holy Scriptures teach us concerning their occupation? -- 10. What are our duties towards our Guardian Angel?

SECTION II.

Of Man.

God, wishing to distinguish man from the rest of creatures, caused to hold consultation within himself at the moment of his creation, saying, "Let Us make man to our image and likeness."* He formed his body of the earth, and animated it by an immortal soul, capable of loving, willing, and thinking. Man, thus formed to the image and likeness of God, is capable of possessing Him eternally, if he render himself worthy of that happiness, by practising the virtues which God has commanded.

A companion was necessary for the first man, and therefore a woman was created: she was taken from his side, and received the name of Eve; thus was marriage first instituted. All mankind have descended from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and ought, therefore, to consider themselves as members of one common family, and love one another as children of one common father. Observe, that man has not only a body, which is mortal, but also a soul, capable of thinking and loving, and which, in its own nature, is immortal and indestructible.

One of the Roman emperors had a stag which was nearly tame. It was fed at the palace, to which it returned every day, after having roamed through the neighboring forest. The emperor, with whom it was a favorite, fearing that, during his excursions, any one might pursue and wound

* Gen., i. 26.

it, had a golden collar put around its neck, and on it were engraved the words, "Touch me not: I belong to Cæsar."

We came forth from God; we belong to Him; He therefore marks us with his seal—our souls with their faculties, our bodies with their senses, bear the impress of the Divinity. Let us, then, never suffer ourselves to be seduced by bad example, or drawn away by passion, for thus we should become the slaves of the malicious spirit, who is the great enemy of our happiness.

EXERCISES. — 1. How did the Almighty distinguish man from the rest of creatures? -- 2. How was Eve formed? -- 3. What may we deduce from the fact that we are descendants of the same father? -- 4. Of what is man composed?

SECTION III.

On the Immortality of the Soul.

The belief of the immortality of the soul was held by the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and by all the adorers of the true God, as well as by the faithful, under the new dispensation; and no less made by them the governing principle of their conduct. The most renowned sages of antiquity—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and many others, have, by the light of reason, aided by some traditional reminiscences, acknowledged that death is not the end of the whole man, but that his soul—the more noble part—survives this catastrophe, which is nothing more than the separation of the two substances—the soul and the body—of which man is composed.

We are as convinced that we possess these two substances, as we are that we exist: for that which thinks in us, which is capable of so great a variety of knowledge and sentiment, cannot be material. The dogma of the immortality of the soul is not founded upon simple conjectures, or upon mere probabilities; the primitive revelation, the general persuasion of mankind, the ideas which God has given of his power, justice, and goodness, are all so many foundations of this truth, as consoling to the virtuous, as it is terrifying to the wicked

After his sin, man was condemned to death; his body was to return into its mother dust: but if his soul was to perish with his body, if this principle of life, which emanated from the Creator, was to be annihilated, the promise of a Redeemer would be absurd, and totally without a motive. The belief of a future state, and consequently of the immortality of the soul, was always one of the fundamental articles of religion; it was the hope of our first parents; it is also ours, and will be realized if we observe, faithfully, the precepts which the Lord has given us. It was the belief of the entire world; and idolatry, far from destroying it, had added to its strength, or rather, it was the *abuse* of this belief which was one of the sources of pagan worship: for never would divine honors have been paid to men after their death, if there had not been a firm belief in a future existence.

God, in creating our souls with such rare capacities, could have had no other object than to make them happy, by the possession of a good, suited to the nature with which He had endowed them. But can such good be found in this world? or, is the virtuous man always the happiest? Alas! every day's experience teaches the contrary. The divine justice is another proof of the soul's immortality. We frequently, in this world, see vice triumphant, and virtue trampled upon; the impious man possessed of affluence; the good, in misery. Order must be established; virtue must be rewarded, and vice punished. But how could order be established, or justice exercise her rights, if the soul were not immortal? Remorse, it may be said, is the punishment of guilt; but what would remorse be without faith? We may, then, say with truth, that to deny the immateriality of the soul, and consequently its immortality, would not only be contrary to the general belief of mankind, but even to sound reason and common sense.

This truth, believed at all times, and by almost all mankind, is, no doubt, terrifying to the impious; it pursues him everywhere; it rends his heart, notwithstanding his efforts to tranquillize it. The unbounded liberty which he gives to his passions, makes eternity terrible to

him, because he has nothing advantageous to hope for, he wishes not to believe, but remorse pursues him; he doubts, but he cannot persuade himself. Thus incredulity discovers the guilty soul. "When the thought of the future visits the incredulous, he cringes, he trembles, he doubts, he believes." The just, on the contrary, find in this truth, the strength necessary for bearing with resignation the sufferings of this life; and on it, too, they found their hopes for eternity.

A few hours before his death, Bernardine St. Pierre, author of the *Studies of Nature*, seeing his children weeping around his bed, addressed them in these affecting terms: "My dear children, death shall separate us for a short time only: then, render not my departure so painful to me. I feel that I quit the earth, but it is only that I may enter into life. Farewell!—avoid evil—do good—live in a Christian manner,—and we shall soon meet again, never more to part."

EXERCISES. — 1. Are Christians the only ones who have recognized the immortality of the soul? — 2. What are the foundations of our belief in the immortality of the soul? — 3. How is the promise of a Redeemer a proof of the immortality of the soul? — 4. How has the belief of a future state always been regarded? — 5. Show us that idolatry has not destroyed this belief. — 6. Is divine justice another proof of the existence of a future state? — 7. How so? — 8. What are the effects of this belief on the impious and the just?

SECTION IV.

Of the Fall of Man.

Man, when he came forth from the hands of his Creator, was just, holy, happy, and adorned with many noble and excellent qualities; his understanding was illuminated by a divine light, which informed him of all that was necessary for him to know. His will was upright, without the least inclination to evil; nothing troubled the peace and tranquillity of his soul; nor was his body subject to inconvenience, disease, or death. The majesty of God required that He should exact of man the devotion of his heart, and proofs of his love and obedience. When, therefore, He placed

him in the terrestrial paradise, He forbade him to touch the fruit of a particular tree, but allowed him, at the same time, to eat the fruit of every other. This command, so easy to be observed—particularly by man in the state of innocence, when his will was naturally inclined to good—was accompanied by an awful threat, that its violation would be visited with the penalty of death: “In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.”* Notwithstanding the benefits of God, and the fear which this threat must naturally have excited, the woman yielded to the suggestions of the devil. In order to deceive her, the devil took the form of a serpent, and, having told her that by eating of the forbidden tree, she should become like God, knowing good and evil, she ate the fruit, and afterwards made Adam a partner in her disobedience.

By their disobedience, our first parents lost all the advantages which God, at their creation, had bestowed upon them. A thick darkness overspread their understanding; their will became depraved; their passions obscured the light of reason; and the inclinations of their heart became corrupt and prone to evil. In losing original justice, and separating themselves from God, they became subject to eternal damnation; their bodies were condemned to labor, sickness, and death. These terrible consequences of Adam’s sin have descended to all his posterity. In disobeying God, he lost himself, and the whole human race, of which he was the head. We, being descended from him, have become inheritors of his sin and its penalties, as we would have been of his innocence and happiness, had he not violated the command which God had imposed upon him. The sin thus transmitted to us is called *original sin*, with which we are infected before our entrance into the world. “I was conceived in iniquity,” says the Prophet David, “and in sins did my mother conceive me:”† and St. Paul, speaking of it, says, “By one man sin entered the world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.”‡

The pagan philosophers themselves have, by the aid of

* Gen., i, 17.

† Ps. i. 17.

‡ Rom., v, 12.

human reason, arrived, not indeed at the knowledge of this truth, but at the belief that man is born guilty of some crime. The sight of the miseries to which, from infancy, he is subject, has led them to this belief. Indeed, without the belief of original sin, man is himself a mystery still more inexplicable; for how are we otherwise to account for all the contradictions that are found in him? So much dignity and baseness; so much light and darkness; so lively an inclination for happiness, and such profound misery! He approves what is good, but does not practise it; he condemns evil, and yet commits it. The knowledge of original sin can alone unravel these difficulties, and reconcile these contradictions.

The virtue and knowledge which man possesses, come directly from God, and from the good qualities with which he was originally endowed; they are the beautiful remains of a great edifice which has crumbled to ruins. Vice and ignorance are the consequences of sin, which has corrupted God's work, and so defiled his image in man, that it can scarcely be recognized. We see an example of this rigorous justice in the conduct of a king, who punishes a rebellious subject by degrading him and his posterity. Comparisons drawn from human things are, however, always imperfect; the rules of human justice are but a shadow of those of God's justice; they may assist our faith, but they cannot discover to us the depth of that impenetrable mystery.

God had created man to render him and all his posterity eternally happy. Man being just and holy coming from the hands of God, it was his duty to preserve these precious advantages, and to transmit them unimpaired to his children. This he could have done by remaining faithful. Had he persevered in justice, he would have communicated his own happiness to his descendants, and have thus secured their eternal felicity. But by his disobedience he forfeited all; and the consequences of his sin—ignorance, inclination to evil, the miseries of life, the death of the body, and loss of the soul—have been transmitted to us. Thus, we should for ever have been excluded from

Heaven, had not God provided a remedy for our evils, by sending a Redeemer.

“And the Lord called Adam, and said to him, ‘Where art thou?’ And he said, ‘I heard thy voice in paradise: and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And He said to him, ‘And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?’ And Adam said, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest me for a companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’ And the Lord God said to the woman, ‘Why hast thou done this?’ And she answered, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I did eat.’ And the Lord God said to the serpent: ‘Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth; upon thy breast shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.’ To the woman also He said: ‘I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee.’ And to Adam He said: ‘Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth of thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.’” —

GENESIS, *chap. iii.*

EXERCISES. — 1. In what state was man created? — 2. To what trial did the Almighty subject him? — 3. Did Adam remain faithful to this command? — 4. What were the consequences of his disobedience? — 5. Have we become inheritors of Adam’s sin? — 6. What is the sin thus transmitted called? — 7. Had the pagan philosophers any idea of the original fall? — 8. Can the contradictions that are found in man’s heart be accounted for without the belief of original sin? — 9. What would have been the consequence had man persevered in justice?

CHAPTER III.

ARTICLE II.—“AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON,
OUR LORD.”

SECTION I.

Of the Promise of a Redeemer.

Man would be lost without resource, had not God's mercy interposed to save him. He had offended an infinite majesty, and was, consequently, incapable of repairing his sin, since he was incapable of offering infinite satisfaction; but, by a gratuitous mercy, God, before He pronounced against Adam the decree of his condemnation, comforted him with the promise of a future Redeemer, cursing the serpent, and declaring that the seed of the woman should crush his head, that is, should overcome the devil. Such was the meaning attached to it by our first parents and by their descendants.

This promise was not fulfilled until about four thousand years; but it was frequently repeated during this long interval. It was renewed to Abraham, when he was chosen to be the father of a people by whom God was particularly to be honored. “Go forth,” said He to him, “out of thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name” * * * “AND IN THEE SHALL ALL THE KINDRED OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.”* This promise was renewed in similar terms to Isaac and Jacob. The latter clearly foretold the coming of the Deliverer, promised from the beginning of the world. Being on his death-bed, and announcing by the spirit of God to his twelve sons, what was to befall their posterity in future ages, he addressed Juda, his fourth son, in these remarkable words: “Juda, thee shall thy brethren praise; thy hands shall be on the necks of thy enemies; the sons

* Gen., xii, 1.

of thy father shall bow down to thee. * * * The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and HE SHALL BE THE EXPECTATION OF NATIONS."* Thus was the promise made to Adam and to Abraham, more clearly developed. The Redeemer of mankind is to be born in the family of Juda, and the time of his coming is pointed out—when the sceptre, that is the pre-eminence, or principal authority, is taken away from the house of Juda.

Three hundred years after the death of Jacob, God, wishing to deliver his people from the yoke of the Egyptians, who oppressed them, raised up Moses, whom He filled with his spirit, and to whom He imparted the gift of miracles. This holy man, having conducted the Hebrew people to the borders of the promised land, and being now on his death-bed, assembled them around him, and renewed to them the promise of a Deliverer more powerful than himself, and alone capable of introducing them into the true land of promise, of which Canaan was but a figure. Thus God kept up among his people the expectation of the Savior, promised to their fathers. This Prophet, greater than Moses, the Savior of his people, and Author of a new alliance, before whom Moses was to be silent, and who alone at his coming was to be heard to speak, is the Savior of mankind, whose doctrine was one day to enlighten the world, and of whom God himself would be heard to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."† Until his coming, there had not appeared in all Israel a prophet like to Moses, to whom God spoke face to face, and who gave a law to his people.



Whilst Daniel poured forth his soul before the Lord, and offered up fervent prayers for his people, the Angel Gabriel came to him by the orders of God, and instructed him concerning the time when the Messiah, whom he called the *Eternal Justice* and the *Holy of Holies*, should, according to the decrees of God, appear upon the earth.

* Gen., xlix, 8, 10.

† Matt., xvii, 5

He also informed him of the time in which the Christ, the long-promised and expected Messiah, would be put to death. This favor was, he said, granted him by God, because he was "a man of desires." *

EXERCISES. — 1. What would become of man had not the Messiah made his appearance? — 2. At what circumstance, and for what motive did God make the first announcement of the Messiah? — 3. What promise was afterwards made to Abraham? — 4. Tell us the prophecy of Jacob. — 5. Did Moses foretell the coming of the Messiah?

SECTION II.

Development of the Promises. Future Conversion of the Gentiles.

All the nations of the earth, with the exception of the Jews, were plunged in the darkness and disorders of idolatry. God was almost forgotten, and the devil, under various forms, everywhere adored. To this impious worship, confirmed by time, all the passions ministered their support; and it would seem as if men would never renounce errors so ancient, so accredited, and so universal. God, however, had resolved to destroy the empire of Satan, as He had promised to Adam, and to recall mankind to the knowledge of the truth.

So great a work was reserved for the Messiah; and one of the most sensible marks of his coming was, that he would enlighten and convert all the nations of the earth. Nor did God fail, from time to time, to make known this event, so favorable to the Gentiles. All the Prophets saw it by a divine light; they predicted it many ages before its accomplishment, and on occasions, too, when it appeared incredible. They all foretold that the Messiah would dissipate the darkness which covered the face of the earth; that he would enlighten the Gentiles; that he would be their Liberator, as well as that of the Jews, and would make of both but one people—adorers of the true God. The Prophets were the harbingers whom the great King sent before his Son, to keep alive in the minds of men the expectation of his coming.

* Vide Daniel, ix.

All the characteristics of our Redeemer were distinctly pointed out, together with the chief circumstances which should accompany his birth, life, death, and resurrection. His history may be said to have been written before he made his appearance among men. The royal Prophet spoke of the Messiah in the clearest terms. He styled him his Lord, and acknowledged him to be the Son of God. He foretold that his kingdom would extend over all nations, and would have no other limits than those of the universe; he foretold his cruel death, and the chief circumstances of his passion—that his hands and feet would be pierced—his body violently suspended—his thirst quenched with vinegar and gall—his garments divided, and lots cast for his coat. He foretold, at the same time, that “he should not see corruption,”* but would arise glorious from the tomb. This prediction is the more remarkable, as it was made more than a thousand years before its accomplishment. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah with equal clearness. He saw him come forth from the root of Jesse, and take birth of a virgin Mother; and he styled him the Admirable—the Father of the world to come—the Prince of Peace—the *Emmanuel*. He declared that his kingdom should be everlasting—that all the nations of the earth would fall prostrate before him—that at his word the lame should walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the blind see, and the dead rise again. Having announced the glories of the Redeemer, he next foretells his humiliations. He represents him as one unknown, despised—as the last of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmities; and adds, that he would be spit upon, treated as a criminal, reputed with the wicked, and that, having delivered himself for our ransom, he should be led to death as a lamb to the slaughter. But the Prophet subjoins, that by his death, the Redeemer should become the head of a numerous posterity, and that the Gentiles would flock to him in multitudes, whilst the Jews, on account of their incredulity, would, with the exception of a small number, be utterly rejected. What can be more detailed, unless it be the

* Ps. xv, 10. Acts, ii, 27.

Gospel history of our Redeemer's life? And yet Isaiah prophesied more than seven hundred years before Christ's coming.

The other Prophets speak no less clearly of the Messiah. One foretells that "Bethlehem Ephrata,"* one of the cities of Juda, would be rendered illustrious by the birth of the Messiah; another that he would be sold for "thirty pieces of silver," and that in the purchase of a "potter's field"† this money should be expended. The same Prophet represents him as a "king," but "poor, and riding on an ass,"‡ when making his entry into Jerusalem. Aggeus publishes the glory of the second temple, because the Messiah, "the desired of all nations,"§ would sanctify it by his presence.

The Prophet Daniel determines the precise time of Christ's coming. Whilst his mind was occupied on the captivity of the Hebrew people, and the seventy weeks it was to last, he was suddenly elevated by the spirit of God, to the contemplation of greater events, viz., that after "seventy weeks" of years, (four hundred and ninety years,) a more deplorable captivity would terminate, and the whole human race be set free by the death of Christ—a freedom consisting in a deliverance from sin, and in the eternal reign of justice,—that in the last week the Christ would be put to death, that a new alliance would be confirmed, and the ancient sacrifices abolished. After the death of Christ, he further adds that there shall be horror and confusion—the holy city and the sanctuary will be destroyed—the people who had not known him will no longer be his people—abominations will be seen in the holy place; and a desolation, which "will continue to the consummation, and to the end."||

Malachy, the last of the Prophets, foretells that the sacrifices of the Jews should be rejected; that in their place a pure offering would be instituted, and that this clean offering and sacrifice should be offered among the Gentiles in every place, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, throughout the whole world:

* Micheas, v, 2. † Zach., xi, 12. Matt., xxvii, 9, 10.
 ‡ Zach., ix, 9. § Aggeus, ii 8. || Dan., ix.

—"for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts."* These prophecies are all contained in the sacred writings, the authenticity of which is attested by the unsuspected testimony of an entire people, the Jews, the declared enemies of Christianity, and who cannot avoid treating these writings with veneration, though they find in them their own condemnation. From the Jews they have descended to us; and it would seem as if God has preserved that people amidst so many revolutions, and the subversion of so many nations, to give a living and striking proof of the authority and veracity of these writings.

To convince the most incredulous of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and to prove that he is the true Messiah promised by the Prophets, we have but to compare the characteristics of the *Desired of all nations* with the events which took place at the coming of Jesus Christ upon earth. If we look at the predictions and then at the facts—holding the Old Testament in one hand and the New in the other—the resemblance is so exact that it is impossible not to recognize it. It is an additional fact, that at the time of our Savior's birth, the expectation of the Messiah was general, not only in Judea, but throughout the entire East; and this is attested even by pagan writers. Suetonius tells us that it was an old and constant opinion in the East, that conquerors would come from Judea who would be masters of the world. Tacitus expresses himself in similar terms. "Many," he says, "were at this period persuaded, that men should come forth from Judea who would be masters of the world." This general expectation was founded on the prophecy of Jacob, who foretold that the Messiah would come when the Jews were no longer governed by princes of the race of Juda, and on that of Daniel, who had fixed the period of Christ's coming, to four hundred and ninety years. The carnal Jews and the pagans understood the terms of the prophecies relating to the Messiah in their literal sense, and confounded his spiritual empire with the sovereignty of a conqueror; but the prophecies are not on this account the less true; and facts attest that the

* Mal., i, 11.

Apostles, who came forth from Judea, brought all nations under obedience to the law of Christ.

The Gospel points out the literal accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus Christ. He was born in Bethlehem; he gave a new law to his people—performed the most stupendous miracles—sanctified the temple by his presence—died ignominiously on a cross—rose again on the third day, &c.

The knowledge of the true God was preserved in the kingdom of Ethiopia. Candace, who was its queen in the time of the Apostles, sent one of her officers, with presents, to adore the Lord in the temple of Jerusalem. The officer was returning, and reading in his chariot the prophecy of Isaiah, when the Lord ordered Philip the Deacon to follow him. The passage which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter."* St. Philip being come up, thus addressed him: "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?" "How can I," replied the officer, "unless some man show me?" He then invited St. Philip into his chariot, and begged him to tell him "of whom doth the Prophet speak this? of himself, or of some other?" St. Philip availed himself of this opportunity to speak to him of Jesus Christ, and of the necessity of being baptized in his name. The officer believed the word of the Lord which was spoken to him; and having come to a place in which there was water, he asked what was to hinder him from being baptized. St. Philip answered, nothing, if he believed; to which he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."† Then they descended into the water, and St. Philip baptized him. Then St. Philip disappeared, and the officer continued his journey, wondering at what had happened, and glorifying the Lord for the grace he had received. It is supposed, and with reason, that he afterwards made Jesus Christ known to his countrymen, and thus became their apostle.

EXERCISES —1. What was the condition of almost the entire world before the coming of Christ? — 2. Did God, at any time, foretell the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the Messiah? — 3. Who

* Isa., liii, 7.

† Acts, viii, 30, 34, 37.

predicted in the clearest terms the coming of the Messiah? — 4. Tell us of the principal circumstances in the life of Jesus Christ predicted by David. — 5. What did Isaiah prophesy concerning the greatness and humility of the Messiah? — 6. What does Daniel foretell of the Messiah's advent? — 7. What is the prophecy of Malachy? — 8. May we believe in the authenticity of these prophecies? — 9. How may we convince the most incredulous of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and prove that he is the true Messiah promised by the Prophets? — 10. What writings point out the literal accomplishment of these prophecies?

CHAPTER IV.

ARTICLE 3.—“WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY.”

SECTION I.

The Mystery of the Incarnation.

The only Son of God, who from eternity had dwelt in the bosom of the Father, so humbled himself in time as to take a body and soul like ours. He, “being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit, found as a man.”* The Father did not become man, neither did the Holy Ghost; it was the Son, the second person of the adorable Trinity, who assumed our nature. The manner in which this mystery was accomplished can neither be conceived nor expressed. The Gospel informs us, that when the time decreed in the divine counsels had arrived, an angel was deputed to the Virgin Mary: that he saluted her with the title, “Full of grace;”† announced to her that she should become a mother without ceasing to be a virgin; and that he who should be born of her, would be the Son of the Most High. The holy Virgin believed the word of the heavenly messenger, and gave her consent. At that instant the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished: the Holy Ghost formed in her womb the body of Jesus Christ, and united to it a pure soul, and then was effected the union

* Phil., ii, 6, 0.

† Luke, i, 28.

of the divine and the human nature in the person of the Son of God. "The lowliness of the inferior," says the great Pontiff, St. Leo, "was not consumed in the glory of the superior, nor did the assumption of the inferior, diminish the glory of the superior."* The only Son of God thus became man without ceasing to be God, and hence the Blessed Virgin is truly the Mother of God, having conceived and brought forth the Man-God. Mary in becoming a mother, ceased not to be a virgin, Jesus Christ, her only Son, having been conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost. As man he had no Father,—St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, having been given her by God, in order to conceal this mystery under the veil of a chaste marriage; but as God he had a Father, by whom he was begotten from all eternity, and to whom he is equal: "Being in the form of God," he "thought it no robbery to be equal with God."† In Jesus Christ there is but one person, and in this one person there are two distinct natures, the divine and human;—the divine nature by which he is God, equal to the Father; and the human nature by which he is man like unto us, and possessing all the faculties proper to our nature.

Although this mystery infinitely surpasses the capacity of the human mind, yet we believe it firmly, because God, who is the Infallible Truth, has distinctly revealed it. It is by no means contrary to reason, though infinitely above it; and we have in ourselves an image, which, though faint and imperfect, may assist our faith. The human soul, which is of a spiritual and incorruptible nature, is united to a material and corruptible body; and the union of these substances, so very different in their nature, forms but one man who is at the same time body and spirit; corruptible and incorruptible; material and intelligent. In the same way, the Divinity of the Word, and the nature of man, united without being confounded, form but one Jesus Christ, true God and true man, begotten by the Father from all eternity, and born of a Virgin in the fulness of time;—almighty as God, and surrounded with weakness as

* *Serm. i. de Nat.*† *Phil., ii. 6*

man; for, except sin, and the consequences inseparable from it, such as ignorance and concupiscence, our Lord was pleased to subject himself to all our miseries. He was subject to hunger, thirst, fatigue, and all the infirmities of our nature, with this difference alone, that he was subject to these infirmities only because he willed it: we suffer them because they are the consequence of our condition, to which we must submit, how contrary soever to our inclinations. We must not suppose that the divine nature was altered in the Incarnation. God, without ceasing to be all that He is, has deigned to unite himself to human nature; He has lost nothing by this union: his opprobriums and his sufferings affected only his humanity: as man He suffered—as God He imparted an infinite value to his sufferings; as man He became an infant, to be the model for every age—as God-Man He redeemed the human race.

The Son of God became man to redeem us from the slavery of sin, and from the pains of hell, and to merit for us everlasting life, all right to which we had lost, as well by our own transgressions, as by the sin of our first parents. We had offended a God of infinite majesty, and his justice could not be satisfied, but by an atonement proportionate to the injury which sin had offered Him. Man could not, then, of himself, offer to God sufficient satisfaction, or merit his forgiveness. It was the Son of God made man, true God and true man, who alone could offer that satisfaction; as a man, suffering for our transgressions, and as God, giving to his sufferings infinite value. By this admirable invention of Divine Wisdom, sin is punished, and the sinner is saved—"mercy and justice have met each other: justice and peace have kissed"*—ample reparation is made for the insult offered to the majesty of God by sin.

Jesus Christ has, then, become our Mediator—a perfect Mediator—one with the Father by his divinity, and united to us by his humanity,—who could suffer like us, because he possessed a nature like ours, and reconcile us to God, being God himself; a mediator, who, by his perfect sancti-

* Ps. lxxxiv, 11.

ty, is infinitely agreeable to Him, before whom he presents himself as a victim for the reconciliation of sinners. A comparison will exhibit this truth in a still clearer light. If a king were insulted by the lowest of his subjects, neither the criminal himself, nor any other subject of the king, could possibly offer to his royal majesty a satisfaction equal to the offence: all that the criminal could do, would be always much less than the grievousness of the injury required; but if the son of a king, the heir presumptive to his crown, already seated with him upon his throne, moved with compassion for this unfortunate person, descended from that throne, divested himself of his princely ornaments, and, covered with sackcloth and ashes, cast himself at his father's feet, and offered to submit to the punishment due to the transgressor,—we should readily conceive that a humiliation so profound, was a satisfaction proportionate to the majesty of the person offended; that the injury was fully repaired; and that the king might, without prejudice to the strictest justice, extend mercy to the criminal. This is an image of the grace which God grants to sinful men, by the incarnation of his Son. How admirable is He in all his works; and, above all, in this great work of love! What benefit comparable to that of having given his only Son to save us! What, then, ought to be our gratitude towards our benign and most generous Redeemer, who has stripped himself of his glory, in order to clothe himself with our nature, to be subject to our infirmities, and to appear and be, in reality, like to us in all things, sin and ignorance excepted!

A follower of the heresiarch Eutyches, speaking to a child who had been carefully instructed in the Catholic faith, wished to make him believe that there is but one nature in Jesus Christ. For this purpose he took two pieces of iron, which having made red hot, he joined together so as to form one piece: "Thus," said he, "the two natures—the divine and human—being united together in Jesus Christ, form only one nature in his person." "But," replied the child, "if a small ingot of gold be put

in place of one of the pieces of iron, and fused with the other, would the mixture be all gold or all iron? Would not each piece remain what it was before? Would not the one be gold and the other iron, although both were united together? You cannot deny it. See, then, two pieces, the one gold, the other iron, distinguished from each other, though both form but one piece. In like manner," continued the child, "the divine nature and the human are distinct from each other, and yet form but one person in Christ."—EDIFYING LETTERS.

An ecclesiastic of Constantinople, named Athanasius, blasphemously asserted in public, that the Blessed Virgin should not be called the Mother of God; and Nestorius, the patriarch, instead of putting a stop to the scandal, defended the preacher, and maintained that there were in Jesus Christ two persons, as well as two natures; and, consequently, that his mother should not be called the Mother of *God*, but Mother of the *man*, Jesus Christ. St. Cyril of Alexandria opposed and refuted these errors, and they were condemned by St. Celestine, Pope, in a council held in Rome in 430. The following year a council assembled at Ephesus, for the condemnation of these errors. Nestorius, who was held in horror by all the people for his impiety, was condemned, and deposed from his patriarchal dignity, and the sentence of his excommunication pronounced by the Fathers in the following terms: "The holy Council, assembled by the grace of God in the city of Ephesus, to Nestorius, the new Judas. Know that for the impious doctrine thou hast preached, and for thy obstinacy in maintaining it, thou art deposed from all ecclesiastical functions and dignities by the holy Council, according to the laws and rules of the Church." Nestorius was exiled into Africa, by the emperor Theodosius the younger: his tongue shortly after became frightfully ulcerated, and was devoured by worms to the very root. After having wandered about in different places, he died at length in great misery, and impenitent.—MERAULT.

EXERCISES -- 1. By what mystery has God fulfilled the promise made to Adam after his fall? -- Which of the three divine Persons became man? -- 3. What information does the Gospel afford us of the manner in which the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished? -- 4. How many natures are there in Jesus Christ? -- 5. Can an image of the mystery of the Incarnation be found in man? -- 6. May we suppose the divine nature altered in this mystery? -- 7. Why did the Son of God become man? -- 8. Show that our divine Redeemer alone could repair the injury made to God by sin. -- 9. Explain the truth of this assertion by a comparison.

SECTION II.

Of the Birth of Jesus Christ.

Augustus Cesar, the Roman emperor, having ordered a census of all the inhabitants of his vast empire, Joseph and Mary, that they might there be enrolled, repaired to Bethlehem, to which city their family originally belonged. Here, in the year of the world 4004, the Son of God was born in a stable, the poverty of St. Joseph and his holy spouse having excluded them from the inns. His birth was announced by angels to the poor shepherds, who watched by turns over their flocks; and as soon as the announcement was made, these blessed spirits sang, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."* Eight days after, he was circumcised, and on the same day, Mary and Joseph, in obedience to the order they had received from God by an angel, gave him the name of *JESUS*, which signifies *Savior*, for he was come to save all men, and to deliver them from sin and hell. To the name *JESUS*, is added that of *CHRIST*, which signifies, *anointed* or *consecrated*; not that he was anointed in a sensible manner, but on account of the hypostatic union of his human with the divine nature. We also call him "our Lord," because he has a particular right over all Christians, whom he redeemed with his precious blood.

A few days after his Circumcision, Jesus Christ was acknowledged as God and King by the *Magi*, or wise men, who, guided by a star, came from the East to adore him.

* Luke, ii, 14

Being arrived at Jerusalem, the royal city, they inquired, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him."* The doctors of the law, interrogated by Herod, king of Judea, declared that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod, alarmed, and already meditating the death of the Infant-God, desired the wise men to inform him, when they should have found the child, that he, too, might go and adore him. The wise men continued their journey, found the infant whom they had so eagerly sought, offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh; but, admonished by an angel that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country.†

In obedience to the law, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, forty days after the birth of Jesus, carried him to the temple to present him to God, because he was "the first-born."‡ The holy Virgin, at the same time, complied to the letter with what the law of purification required on the occasion. What admirable examples of humility and obedience!

Herod, finding that the wise men had returned homeward, conceived the design of murdering all the male children of two years old and under, in and about Bethlehem, imagining that the Savior of the world would surely be involved in the massacre; but St. Joseph, forewarned by an angel of all that was to happen, fled into Egypt with Jesus and Mary, where he remained until after the death of this barbarous prince. He then returned, and resided at Nazareth of Galilee, for which reason Jesus was afterwards, through contempt, styled a *Nazarean*.

At the age of twelve years, Jesus accompanied his blessed Mother and St. Joseph to Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the Pasch, and remained in the temple, without their knowing of his absence, till the evening of the first day of their journey homeward, when they returned in search of him to Jerusalem, where they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and pro-

* Matt., ii. 2.

† Matt., ii, 8, 12.

‡ Matt., i, 25.

posing questions to them, in a manner so extraordinary, that those who heard him, were astonished at his wisdom and his answers.* At the age of thirty, he was baptized in the river Jordan by St. John the Baptist, the Holy Ghost descended upon him, in the form of a dove, and the Eternal Father declared from Heaven, that he was his "Beloved Son."† He was then led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, where he fasted forty days and nights, without any nourishment. It is to honor this fast of Jesus Christ, that the Church has established the annual fast of Lent. He afterwards permitted himself to be tempted by the devil, to teach us not to be troubled at temptations, to instruct us in the manner of resisting them, and to merit for us the grace necessary for overcoming them.

A good mother, as pious as she was enlightened in her faith, recommended to her children, not to let any day pass without begging the blessing of the Infant Jesus. "When you will have finished your morning and night prayers," said she to them, "imagine that the Blessed Virgin appears before you, with the child Jesus in her arms; bow down with respect, and say to her with fervor: O Mary, deign to extend over me the hand of your divine Son, that, blessed by him, I may avoid whatever displeases him, and do the good which he wills; that I may imitate him in his obedience and his other virtues, and render myself worthy of possessing him with you in Heaven."

EXERCISES.—1. What does the Gospel say of the principal circumstances of the birth of our divine Lord?—2. What mean these words Jesus Christ?—3. Why do we call Jesus Christ our Lord?—4. Give us an account of the adoration of the Magi.—5. What did the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph do forty days after the birth of Christ?—6. What design did Herod conceive, seeing that he had been foiled by the Magi?—7. How did Jesus Christ escape this cold-blooded massacre?—8. With what circumstances, in the private life of our Lord, does the Gospel acquaint us?

* Luke, ii, 46, 47.

† Matt., iii, 17

SECTION III.

Of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

No sooner had Jesus Christ come forth from the desert, than he began to preach his Gospel, or New Law. From among his disciples he selected twelve, whom he named *Apostles*, that is, persons sent, because he destined them for the conversion of the world. These were, Peter and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Jude his brother, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot.

The law which our divine Redeemer brought into the world is truly admirable; it forms a body of doctrine so perfect, that we can neither add to it nor take from it. It teaches man all his duties to God, to his neighbor, and to himself; it is suitable to him as a member of society and as an individual, in every situation in life, and in every age and nation. When we examine it closely, we are forced to avow, that its Author possessed the most profound knowledge of the entire man—of all his evils, and of their proper remedies; of the end of his creation, and of the means of its attainment.

It is evident that if men conformed to this morality, they would be as good and happy as it is possible to be on earth. And if we represent to ourselves a truly Christian people, who love God as their father and all men as their brethren, who have but one heart and one soul, who all aspire to the same end, walk towards the same term—the kingdom of Heaven—who never make reason yield to passion, the general interest to the individual, but who, on the contrary, place their happiness in that of others, share in the pains of their brethren, and assist in supporting them; such a people would, undoubtedly, be a delightful spectacle to the universe. Yet such would be a state composed of true Christians; peace, which is the sweetest fruit of charity, would reign in the midst of them; the cry of discord would never be heard, because they would be strangers to injustice, violence, jealousies, or rivalry. Here we would

• see no misfortune, because sin, the only real misfortune, would not exist amongst them. Old age, infirmity, sickness, would be balanced by the assurance of future happiness; and death itself would be regarded but as a passage from temporary happiness, to the permanent possession of that which is eternal. Yes, such are the fruits which the doctrine of Jesus Christ, if practised, would produce: "the whole universe would be peopled with friends, and the entire world would become a terrestrial paradise."

The mysteries which religion teaches, are, indeed, above our comprehension; but the motives of credibility which it supplies, are more than sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind. What sublimity, what sanctity in this morality! Fear not, says the Gospel, those who can kill the body, but fear Him who can cast both soul and body into hell. Love God with your whole heart; and remember that no man can serve two masters. Take heed you do not your justice before men to be seen by them. If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. Be not solicitous what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or wherewith you shall be clothed; behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin, but I say to you, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Do good to all, love your enemies; forgive and you shall be forgiven; judge not and you shall not be judged. A drop of water given in my name will not be without its reward. Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven.*

Charmed with the sublimity of this heavenly doctrine, Jean Jacques Rousseau cries out with admiration, "The sanctity of the Gospel speaks to my heart. How trifling

* See Matt., v, vi, x, and xii.

are the pompous writings of the philosophers when compared with it! Can a book, so sublime, and yet so simple, be the work of man? Can he whose history it is, be no more than man? Is his the tone of an enthusiast or of an ambitious sectary? What meekness! what purity in his morals! what touching grace in his discourses! what elevation in his maxims! what ingenuity and justness in his replies! what an empire over his passions! Where is the man—where the philosopher, who knew how to act, to suffer, and to die, without weakness or ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary just man, covered with all the opprobrium of crime, and worthy of all the rewards of virtue, he depicted every feature of the character of Jesus Christ. The resemblance is so striking that all the holy Fathers have remarked it: it was impossible not to recognize it. What folly, what blindness, what rashness, to compare the son of Sophronius with the Son of Mary! what a disparity between them in life and death! Socrates is said to have invented morality; but others had practised it before he taught it; he described only what they had done, putting into the shape of lessons that of which they had given the example. Aristides had been just before Socrates described what justice was; Leonidas had died for his country before Socrates taught that patriotism was a duty; the Spartans had been temperate before Socrates praised sobriety, and Greece had abounded in virtuous men before he defined virtue. But where did Jesus Christ learn the pure and sublime morality of which he alone gave the lessons and the example? The death of Socrates, discoursing tranquilly with his friends, was the sweetest one could desire; that of Jesus Christ, expiring in torments and opprobrium, cursed and railed at by the people, is the most appalling that can be imagined. Socrates, receiving the poisoned draught from an executioner who shed tears in presenting it, wished him a blessing; Jesus dying in frightful torments, prayed for his brutal executioners. Yes; if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus Christ were those of a God. Shall we say that the Gospel history is but a fiction. the work of human inven

tion? Ah! it is not thus that men invent. The facts relating to Socrates, of which no one doubts, are far less authentic than those concerning Jesus Christ. Indeed it would be more incredible that a number of men should agree to fabricate this book, than that one alone should be the subject of it. Never did the Jewish writers find its tone or its morality; and the Gospel has characteristics of truth so grand, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of them should be more astonishing than the heroes."

Diderot, as he one day read the Gospel for his daughter, was surprised in the act by one of his friends, who testified his astonishment thereat. "After all," said this philosopher, in self-defence, "what can I teach her that is better for her to learn?" And the famous Byron, although an enemy to true piety, wished that his daughter should be educated in the principles of faith. How many others would have admired the sublimity of the Gospel, and believed and adored its mysteries, had it not commanded the avoidance of all evil and the practice of every virtue!

EXERCISES. — 1. What did Jesus Christ on coming forth from the desert? — 2. What is the meaning of the word *apostle*? — 3. Name the twelve Apostles? — 4. What are the special features of the perfection of Christ's doctrine? — 5. What would be the result if all men were faithful observers of the law of Christ? — 6. Enumerate some of the evangelical precepts.

SECTION IV.

Of the Life of Jesus Christ—His Miracles.

Our Lord proved the divinity of his mission, not only by the exact fulfilment of the prophecies which, for four thousand years, had announced his coming, but also, by a vast number of miracles which he performed in his own name. If a prophecy is a proof of divine intervention, so is a miracle, when incontestable. If, for example, we see a man command nature, walk upon the waters, give sight to the blind, raise the dead to life,—we cannot doubt that such a man has been sent by God. We feel that such

works are above human power, and that it is God alone who can thus interrupt the ordinary course of nature. It is thus our Lord proved his mission. He performed a great number of miracles, as the Gospel testifies; he raised the dead, appeased the storm, by commanding the wind and the sea, twice multiplied bread in the desert to feed the multitudes who had followed him, changed water into wine, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, motion to the paralytic; he healed instantly the most inveterate diseases, frequently by a single word, and sometimes, even, without seeing the sick or approaching them.

Remark, that all the miracles of our Lord were useful to men; they were manifestations of his goodness as well as effects of his power; and were performed without ostentation. In vain did the Pharisees demand a sign from Heaven, in vain did Herod desire to witness some prodigy; our Lord never did anything to gratify curiosity, but he never refused to heal the sick, who had recourse to him. The reality of his miracles is unquestionable; they were not wrought in secret, but in the temple, in places of public resort, in the streets, and in the presence of an entire people. Lazarus was raised to life at Bethania, a short distance from Jerusalem, before a multitude of witnesses; the cure of the man who had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years, and that of the man born blind, were effected in the midst of Jerusalem. This last miracle excited much attention; the chiefs of the synagogue examined the man and his parents, but their interrogations served but to confirm the miracle, and to extend its publicity.

If our Lord performed some of his miracles in the desert, it was in the sight of thousands of persons; the greater number took place in the presence of the Pharisees and doctors of the law, his most declared enemies, and those most willing to deny his power; but, confounded by the evidence of those miracles, instead of daring to deny them, they were obliged formally to acknowledge the wonders he performed. "What do we," said they, "for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone, so, all will be-

lieve in him.”* We must then conclude, that the miracles of Jesus Christ were sufficiently numerous and evident to prove him the Messiah, so long promised to mankind. None of the ancient prophets performed such wonders. The people, filled with admiration, acknowledged him as the Messiah: “They glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people.’”†

Our Lord not only performed miracles himself, but conferred on his disciples the power of doing so. Sending them to preach, he thus addressed them: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely give.”‡ And the Apostles did perform all these wonders in the course of their mission. By them they proved that they spoke in the name of the Author of nature; and extraordinary was the effect which they produced, for, by means of them, the whole world was converted to Christianity. This is a continually subsisting proof of the miracles of the Apostles. Religion could not have been established on a firmer basis. Its proofs, which consist in prophecies and miracles, are adapted to the capacities of the most simple, and are, at the same time, capable of convincing the most enlightened. God raised up a crowd of inspired men, who predicted, with the utmost exactness, events which it was impossible to foresee by any natural means, and which were to take place in many ages after. To this first proof he joined that of the most evident miracles, performed in the sight of all Judea, multiplied in numberless ways, and repeated throughout all parts of the world. What stronger evidence can be required to produce a full conviction of the truth of our religion, and an unhesitating submission to all that it inculcates?

A young man being in a company which declaimed against miracles, felt it his duty to defend his faith on that subject. At first he cited unsuspected witnesses—Celsus, Julian, and Porphyry—who all admitted that Jesus Christ had astonished the world by his miracles. He next adduced

* John, xi, 47, 48.

† Luke, vii, 16.

‡ Matt., x, 8.

the admissions of Rousseau and Voltaire ; but, surprised to find his hearers more incredulous than Rousseau, and¹ more obstinate in the rejection of miracles than the impious apostate himself, he said, "It appears that you are absolutely decided not to yield to the authority of your masters. You say it is difficult—nay, impossible, to believe our mysteries, or to practise our morality." "Yes," they cried, "impossible!" "But," replied he, "if our mysteries be incredible, how is it that they have been credited throughout the world; or that the Gospel has had believers in every condition of life, from the cottage to the palace, and at a time, when Baptism was a prelude to martyrdom?" These words covered them with confusion, and they knew not what to reply.—MERAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. Was it only by the exact fulfilment of the prophecies that our Lord proved the divinity of his mission? — 2. Name the principal miracles he wrought. — 3. Why is the reality of the miracles of Jesus Christ unquestionable? — 4. What did the Jewish people say at the sight of the numerous miracles of our divine Lord? — 5. Did Jesus Christ confer on his Apostles the power of working miracles?

SECTION V.

Of the Virtues of our Lord.

Jesus Christ practised in the highest perfection the lessons of virtue which he inculcated and the law which he taught, so that his whole life was a faithful mirror of his doctrine. The more we meditate on his actions, the more shall we admire the eminent sanctity displayed in his conduct. He passed through the state of childhood to give an example of virtue suitable to that period of life. His obedience to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph contains all the virtues of a child; he is docile and submissive; he hears, he follows in everything, the advice of those who have authority over him.* He continues to exercise these tranquil and obscure virtues till the age of thirty, when he commenced his public Mission, at which period, the most sublime virtues began to shine forth in his conduct. His

* Luke, ii, 51, 52.

meeekness was admirable. "The bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench."* He never rejected any one; he received the greatest sinners with kindness; he did not hesitate to eat with them, and when reproached for his condescension, his only reply was that he came to seek not the just but sinners; that they who are well need not the physician, but they who are sick. He represents himself as a good father, who runs to meet his returning child, casts himself on his neck, bathes him with his tears, and delivers himself to the transports of joy inspired by his return. He embraces little children with affection and tenderness, he imposes hands upon them and blesses them, saying to his disciples, "Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." † In everything he displays a goodness which inspires confidence in all who approach him; but this did not prevent him from reprehending, in strong terms, hardened sinners, and principally the Pharisees, whom he openly reproached with their pride and hypocrisy.

Our Lord bore with invincible patience all the evils which befel him; and if we follow him from the stable in which he was born, to the cross on which he died, we shall everywhere find him in sorrows, labor, and sufferings—enduring hunger, thirst, fatigue, and all the inconveniences of the most rigorous poverty; possessing nothing—not even a place "where to lay his head;" ‡ subsisting on what was voluntarily bestowed on him by those to whom he announced the word of God; supporting meekly the pressure of the crowds that followed him, and the importunities of the infirm, by whom he was continually surrounded, insulted, reviled, outraged;—yet no desire of revenge—no word of complaint escaped his blessed lips. But it was in the different circumstances of his passion that he particularly exercised this virtue. In the midst of the most unheard-of tortures, unjustly inflicted, he uttered neither menace nor reproach; and, hanging on the cross,

* Isa., xlii, 3.

† Mark, x, 14.

‡ Matt., viii, 20.

he prayed for his executioners, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

His whole life was a continual exercise of the most profound humility: "Learn of me," said he, "because I am meek and humble of heart,"† He was born of a poor mother, passed thirty years in obscurity, and when he did manifest himself to the world, he carefully avoided all pomp and splendor. He sought not in anything his own glory; he even forbade the publication of his miracles. His detachment from riches was so complete, that he may be said to have espoused poverty; his contempt of honors, and his aversion to pleasure, were so great, that he courted humiliations, and cheerfully embraced sufferings and the cross. With good reason, then, did he reproach the Jews with their disbelief of the truths which he announced to them; for sanctity, so perfect as his, was incontrovertible evidence that he had been sent by God.

A holy man, when consulted on the great affair of salvation, was accustomed to say: "In all your actions, have the example of our Savior before your eyes; thus you shall acquire a sublime degree of perfection, and all the obstacles which oppose your progress shall speedily vanish. On awaking, consider with what fervor his holy humanity rendered homage to his heavenly Father, and the dispositions with which he devoted himself to his daily labors; and learn thence how you should pray, and sanctify the duties of your calling. Reflect how he conversed with his neighbor—on his frugality and modesty at meals—and how many and great were the privations to which he condemned himself out of love for us. If you are poor, remember that your Redeemer had 'not where to lay his head;'‡ if your enemies persecute you, think how the Pharisees hated him; if your friends forsake you, consider that he was sold by Judas, denied by St. Peter, and abandoned by all his disciples. In a word, however you shall be circumstanced, never lose sight of this divine Model, and your life will be truly angelical."

* Luke, xxiii, 34.

† Matt., xi, 29.

‡ Matt., viii, 20.

EXERCISES. — 1. What virtues did our divine Lord practise during his private life? — 2. What sublime virtues shone forth during his public life? — 3. What admirable lessons of patience and meekness did he give to the world? — 4. How did he teach humility? — 5. What practical examples did he give us during his passion?

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION.

ARTICLE 4.—“SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED AND WAS BURIED.”

SECTION I.

Of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

The divine sanctity which manifested itself in our Redeemer, the purity of his doctrine, and the splendor of his miracles, instead of conciliating the Pharisees and chiefs of the Jews, enkindled their envy, and inspired them with the cruel design of putting him to death.

The moment in which he was to abandon himself to their fury, and effect our salvation, being near at hand, he sent two of his disciples to prepare the Pasch, and in the evening repaired with his disciples to the appointed place. Having eaten the paschal lamb according to the law, he arose from table, girded himself with a towel, and washed the feet of his disciples. He then returned to the table, and having given thanks, took bread and blessed it, and changed it into his body. After this he took the cup, and did in like manner, changing the wine which it contained, into his blood. When our Lord had thus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, he commanded his Apostles to do what he had done, thus to perpetuate, to the end of time, the remembrance of his death. At the conclusion of this memorable action, he made a long discourse to the Apostles, in which he testified the greatness of his love for them, warned them of their approaching flight, and promised to manifest himself to them after his resurrection.

Then leaving the supper-room, he repaired to the

Garden of Olives, where being arrived, he removed to a **short** distance from his Apostles in order to pray. Contemplating the enormity of sin, the **greatness** of the sufferings he was to endure, and the abuse men would make of all he was about to do for them, he fell into a mortal agony, which caused him to sweat blood. He besought his heavenly Father, that the bitter chalice, of which he was soon to drink to the very dregs, might pass from him, saying, "Father, if Thou wilt, remove **this** chalice from me. But yet, not my will, but thine be done."* Then an angel appeared, and comforted him.

As soon as Jesus had finished his prayer, Judas entered the garden, at the head of an armed multitude. He approached Jesus and kissed him; for this was the sign by which he had agreed to point him out. Jesus received him meekly, called him by the name of friend, and contented himself with reminding him of the awful crime he was going to perpetrate. He then asked those who accompanied Judas, whom they sought, and on their replying, "Jesus of Nazareth," he said to them, "I am he."† At these words, they fell prostrate on the ground. This fall, as wonderful as it was unexpected, ought to have made them enter into themselves, and acknowledge the divine power of him whom they had come to seize; but their hearts were hardened, and as soon as he had permitted them to rise, they came forward, seized his sacred person, and dragged him, bound with cords, into the city of Jerusalem. In the mean time, all his disciples abandoned him and fled.

The Jews first led him to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, who was High Priest that year. Caiphas questioned him concerning his disciples and his doctrine, and Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to the world. . . . and in private I have spoken nothing. Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them."‡ At these words, one of the attendants gave Jesus a blow, which he received with **unexampled** patience. The chiefs of the Jews, knowing

* Luke, xii, 42. † John, xviii. 5. ‡ John, xviii, 20, 21.

well that they could not convict him of any crime, sought false witnesses, to have some pretext for condemning him to death; but this design not succeeding, on account of the contradictions in their evidence, the High Priest adjured Jesus to say, if he were the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replied, "Thou hast said it. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the High Priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy—What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death;" a sentence which was instantly confirmed by the princes of the priests, and the Pharisees who were present. Then, those who were near Jesus, spat on his face, and having bandaged his eyes, struck him on the face, saying, "Prophesy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee;"* and many other blasphemies they uttered against him. But the denial of St. Peter affected Jesus more sensibly than all those outrages. This disciple having followed his divine Master at a distance, entered the house of the High Priest, where, being charged by a servant-maid as one of Christ's disciples, he instantly denied having ever known him. The charge being reiterated, the Apostle repeated his denial. A servant affirmed that he had seen him in the garden, and Peter, seized with fear, swore that the assertion was untrue. Thus did he, three times, deny his Master; but Jesus, by looking upon him, brought to his remembrance the warning he had given him, that he would thrice deny him; and Peter, touched with repentance, went out and wept bitterly. Jesus remained during the night in the hands of his cruel enemies, from whom he received unheard-of injuries.

Morning being come, the princes of the priests, and the ancients of the people, took counsel against Jesus, that they might put him to death. They led him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, declaring that he was a man who perverted the nation, refused to pay tribute to Cæsar, and

* Matt., xxv, 65, 66.

styled himself king. Pilate interrogated Jesus, but found no crime in him. He therefore told the Jews to take and judge him according to their law; but they replied it was not lawful for them to put any one to death, and redoubling their clamors, declared, that Jesus, by his doctrine, had raised a sedition amongst the people, from Galilee even to Jerusalem. Pilate, hearing that Jesus was a Galilean, and, on this account, subject to Herod, who governed that country, was well pleased to rid himself of the affair, and sent him to this prince, who was then in Jerusalem. Herod questioned Jesus on the accusations against him, but not being able to induce him to give any reply, he treated him as a fool, and having, in mockery, clothed him with a white garment, sent him back to Pilate. The governor, who possessed great natural probity, seeing that it was through envy Jesus had been delivered to him, was desirous of setting him at liberty; but being unwilling to displease the Jews by releasing a man charged with refusing tribute to Cæsar, he endeavored to assuage their fury. He called to him the accusers of our Lord, and told them that neither he himself nor Herod had found him guilty of any crime; but, to gratify them, he would order him to be scourged, and then dismiss him. The Jews being yet dissatisfied, Pilate sought by other means to release our Lord. It was customary at the solemn feast of the Pasch, to deliver a criminal at the request of the Jews; and a notorious robber and murderer, named Barabbas, happened to be in prison. Pilate, therefore, proposed Jesus and Barabbas to the people, and asked which of the two they would have released—not supposing it possible they would demand the liberation of a thief and a murderer, that the meek Jesus, in whom no crime could be found, might be put to death. But the princes of the priests persuaded the people to demand Barabbas; whereupon they all cried out, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.”*

Pilate finding all his expedients unavailing, resolved on having Jesus cruelly scourged, hoping that the sight of his

* Luke, xxiii, 15.

body, covered with wounds and blood, might move the people to compassion. He then abandoned him to the fury of the soldiery, who, having torn him with whips, clothed him with a purple garment, put a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand; then kneeling before him, they saluted him in mockery, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews."* They then spat on his face, and taking the reed out of his hand, struck him with it on the head.

Pilate seeing Jesus in this piteous condition, led him forth from the pretorium, and having seated himself on his tribunal, he said to the Jews, "Behold the man;" adding, that though he had thus punished him, he found no crime in him. But the princes of the priests, and their officers, on seeing Jesus, cried out, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Pilate then said, "Take him you, and crucify him: for I find no cause in him." They replied, "We have a law; and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate, therefore, had heard this saying, he feared the more," and sought some other expedient to save Jesus; but the Jews, unwilling to suffer the least delay, cried again, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend."† Intimidated by these words, the wretched judge caused water to be brought, and washing his hands, said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." The Jews, to remove all apprehensions from his mind, exclaimed, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"‡ Jesus was then abandoned to the fury of his implacable enemies, who, having stripped him of the purple cloak, clothed him with his own garments, placed a heavy cross on his mangled shoulders, and, in this condition, led him out of the city to be crucified. Exhausted by fatigue and suffering, our Blessed Savior fell several times under this enormous burden; but at length, a man named Simon, who was coming out of the country, was forced by the soldiers to carry the cross. We are ignorant of the motive of this conduct; but it is probable, it was through fear lest our Lord might die on the way, and that his crucifixion

* Matt., xxvii, 29. † John, xix, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12

‡ Matt., xxvii, 24, 25.

might thereby be prevented, rather than through any feeling of compassion, that they thus acted.

Being arrived at Mount Calvary, they nailed his sacred hands and feet to the cross, and placed over his head this inscription: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Whilst Jesus hung in agony on the cross, he was assailed with blasphemies. Those who passed by shook their heads, saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." The princes of the priests, the scribes, and ancients, also mocked him, saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save."† The two thieves who were crucified with him, the one on his right hand, the other on his left, made him the same reproaches: one of them, however, was converted, and begged of Jesus to remember him when he should come into his kingdom:—"Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kindom." Jesus mercifully replied, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."‡ He prayed to his Father to forgive his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;"§ then addressing himself to his holy Mother, whom he saw standing at the foot of the cross, he commended her to the care of St. John: "Woman, behold thy son;" and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother." He afterwards said, "I thirst;"|| upon which he was presented with vinegar to drink. Thus were fulfilled the prophecies which had foretold that he would be so treated for love of us, and that by his bruises we should be healed.

A young lady, desirous of entering the religious state, visited the superioress of a convent, and informed her of her intention. The superioress, wishing to put the young lady's constancy to a trial, remarked to her, that theirs was rather a strict rule, and such as she, probably, might not wish to embrace. She then conducted her to the chapel, and told her of the many hours which the sisters

* John, xix, 19.

† Matt., xxvii, 39, 40, 42.

‡ Luke, xxiii, 42, 43.

§ Luke, xxiii, 34.

|| John, xix, 26, 27, 28.

spent in prayer, not only during the day, but even for a considerable portion of the night. She next showed her the dormitory, with the hard and inconvenient beds on which they took their short repose; and then led her to the other parts of the house in which nature had most to suffer,—to the refectory, where they took their coarse and homely meals; to the chapter-room, in which the slightest fault was visited with severe penance, &c.;—and then asked her, would she, under such circumstances, persevere in her resolution. “Madam,” replied the young lady, “I see clearly that nature shall here find much to suffer. One thing, however, consoles me;—I perceive that every apartment is furnished with a crucifix, and, with such a spectacle before my eyes, can any austerity be insupportable?”

EXERCISES. — 1. What enkindled the envy of the Pharisees and the chiefs of the Jews? — 2. Relate the history of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. — 3. Mention the principal instances of the agony of our Lord in the Garden of Olives. — 4. Who delivered Jesus to the chief priests? — 5. Relate how he was delivered. — 6. Where did the Jews first lead him? — 7. How was he treated there? — 8. What did the Jews do to convict him? — 9. What affected Jesus more sensibly than all those outrages? relate the circumstances. — 10. Why was Jesus Christ led before Pilate? — 11. How was he treated by Herod? — 12. What did Pilate to effect the release of Jesus? — 13. What was Pilate's resolve on finding all his expedients unavailing? — 14. Describe the scourging. — 15. What treatment did Jesus receive from the populace, after Pilate had abandoned him to their fury? — 16. Give us a description of our Lord's death.

SECTION II.

Of the Death and Burial of Jesus Christ.

When our Lord had hung during three hours in excruciating agony on the cross, he cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,”* and bowing down his head, he expired. The most stupendous prodigies bore evidence of his divinity. The earth trembled; the rocks were rent asunder; the sepulchres were opened;

* Luke, xxiii, 46.

the dead arose; the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom; the sun was totally eclipsed, though at full noon, so that St. Denis, the Areopagite, had reason to say, that either the God of nature was expiring, or that the end of the world was at hand. Yet these prodigies did not effect the conversion of the Jews. Some, indeed, after the example of the Roman centurion, struck their breast, and said, "Indeed this man was the Son of God:"* the rest remained as obstinate as ever. Not wishing that the bodies should remain on the cross during the Sabbath, the Jews besought Pilate that the legs of the sufferers might be broken, and their bodies taken down. The governor, accordingly, sent soldiers, who broke the legs of the two criminals; but seeing Jesus already dead, they pierced his side with a lance.

Thus was fulfilled what the prophet had predicted: "You shall not break one of his bones:" and, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."† Joseph of Arimathea, desirous of interring the body of Jesus, begged it of Pilate, and, assisted by Nicodemus, took it down from the cross, embalmed it with precious ointments, laid it in a new sepulchre which had been cut into the rock, and closed up the entrance with a large stone, in the presence of the holy women by whom they were accompanied.

By these words, Jesus Christ died,‡ we are to understand, that his soul was separated from his body; but we must remark, that the Divinity did not separate itself from either: it remained constantly united to both. Our blessed Lord, by submitting to death, sanctified our death, and merited for us the grace of rendering this punishment of sin, a voluntary oblation, and one most agreeable to God. He submitted to the humiliation of burial, to take away from this state what is most terrible to nature, and to fill us with the consoling hope of our future resurrection. The sight of our Redeemer enclosed in a tomb, from which he afterwards arose glorious and immortal, ought to assure us of the accomplishment, in our regard, of these words of St.

* Mark, xv, 39.

† John, xix, 36, 37.

‡ See John, xix, 30.

Paul: "It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body"*

It was remarked of St. Elzear, count of Arian, in Provence, France, that he was never dejected, never moved by the most trying events. Whatever was said or done, he was still the same. His pious countess once asked him, how it could possibly happen. "How can I," said he, "be displeased with any one, or utter complaints, when I think of the ignominies which my Savior has endured for me? What frightful torments has he not suffered for my salvation! The thought alone of these sufferings, and of his wonderful charity in praying for those who crucified him, covers me with confusion, when I reflect how little I have yet been able to suffer for him."—SURIUS.

EXERCISES. — 1. What stupendous prodigies took place at the death of Jesus Christ? — 2. How was he buried? — 3. What are we to understand by the expression, Jesus Christ die? — 4. Why did our blessed Lord submit to the humiliation of death and burial? — 5. With what hope should the death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ inspire us?

CHAPTER VI.

ARTICLE 5.—"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL, THE THIRD DAY HE AROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD."

SECTION I.

Christ's Descent into Limbo.

Jesus Christ being dead, his soul descended into limbo, a place of rest, in which the patriarchs and saints of the Old Law were confined, expecting the coming of their Deliverer. These holy souls had loved and glorified God, and had lived in expectation of the Messiah; but they

* 1 Cor., x

were not yet admitted into Heaven, the gates of which had been closed by the sin of our first parents, and were to be opened only by the death of the promised Redeemer. At the presence of the holy soul of Jesus Christ, united to his divinity, these just souls began to enjoy the happiness they had so long and so ardently desired, but they were not admitted into Heaven until the day of the ascension; because it was fitting that he, who, by his death, had opened its gates, should be the first to enter. On this day, then, they entered with him to grace his triumph, and to enjoy for ever, the fruit of their labors.

Whenever you prepare yourselves for Communion, said a holy person to his disciples, endeavor to enter into the dispositions of the holy souls who, for so many ages, expected, in limbo, the coming of the Messiah. Who can express the joy which they felt when they saw their most merciful and divine Liberator? With what transports must they not have prostrated themselves before him, to render him their homages, and to thank him for the satisfaction he had offered for them, and the favor he had bestowed, in thus communicating himself to them! They were occupied solely with him, deeming nothing else worthy of their attention. Renounce, in the same manner, every other affection, and attach yourselves to him alone, for time and eternity.

EXERCISES. — 1. What means the word limbo? — 2. In what state were the souls who were there detained? — 3. When did they ascend into Heaven?

SECTION II.

Of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

On the morning of the Sabbath (Saturday), the Jews went to Pilate, and reported to him what our Lord had said concerning his resurrection. They prayed him to place a guard at the sepulchre, lest the disciples might take away the body of their Master, and then report that he was arisen from the dead. Pilate gave them the permis-

sion to secure the sepulchre: "You have a guard," said he; "go, guard it as you know."* The princes of the priests, having visited the body of Jesus Christ, sealed the stone which closed the entrance of the sepulchre, and placed their guards around it. Thus, by the wise dispensations of Providence, were the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ rendered more certain and authentic, by the very precautions which his enemies had taken to prevent all deception. If the body of our Lord had not been visited in the tomb, more than twenty-four hours after it had been laid therein, the Jews might say that he did not die; and if they had not placed about it their own guards, they might accuse the Apostles of having bribed the Roman soldiers, to permit them to take away his body.

On the first day of the week (Sunday), our Lord having reunited his soul to his body, arose glorious and immortal from the tomb; an angel descended from Heaven, rolled back the stone which closed the entrance of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. The guards were terrified, "and became as dead men;" but recovering themselves, they ran "into the city, and told the chief priests all things that had been done. And they being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: Say you, his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep. And if the governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him, and secure you."†

Mary Magdalene, not aware of what had passed, or that the sepulchre had been guarded, left Jerusalem at an early hour, accompanied by the other holy women, to embalm the body of their Master. When they arrived at the sepulchre, they found it open, and Mary Magdalene returned to acquaint the Apostles with the circumstance. St. Peter and St. John instantly ran to the monument, and finding only the linen cloths in which the body had been wrapped, departed astonished, but not yet believing that our Lord was risen.

Mary Magdalene remained alone at the sepulchre: an

* Matt., xxvii, 65.

† Matt., xxviii, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14.

angel appeared to her, and told her that our Lord had risen; and not long after, our Lord manifested himself to her. "Go," said he, "to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God."* Whilst she went, he appeared to the holy women who had remained behind; and on the same day, he showed himself to two of the disciples, on their way to Emmaus, who thereupon hastened back to the Apostles, whom they found discoursing on the resurrection, and declaring that our Lord had appeared to Simon. "Now, whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saith to them: Peace be to you; it is I; fear not."† Our Lord spoke to them for a long time, and reproached them with their incredulity, in not believing those who had assured them of his resurrection. St. Thomas had been absent on this occasion, and refused to believe in the apparition. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said; Peace be to you." Then addressing Thomas, he bade him put his hand into his side, and his fingers into the wounds of his hands. Thomas answering, said, with astonishment and humility, "My Lord and my God! Jesus saith to him: Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." ‡

During the forty days which our blessed Lord remained on earth, he repeatedly appeared to the Apostles, and to the disciples assembled in great numbers. He conversed with them, ate with them, recalled to their remembrance what he had taught them before his death, instructed them concerning the establishment of his Church, performing miracles in their presence—and thus convincing them that he was truly risen from the dead.

The prophet Jonas is a most striking figure of our Lord in this mystery. He had been commanded by God to

* John, xx, 17.

† Luke, xxiv, 36.

‡ John, xx, 26, 28, 29.

preach penance to the Ninivites, but fearing that this wicked people might put him to death, he embarked for Tharsis. God, displeased with his disobedience, raised a furious tempest. The terrified sailors, considering it supernatural, concluded that there was some criminal on board, on which account they were in danger of shipwreck. To discover him, they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonas. He acknowledged frankly that he was the guilty person, and begged the sailors to throw him into the sea, lest they should all perish through his disobedience. They consented, though reluctantly; and, no sooner had they cast him overboard, than the tempest ceased. But God, who was resolved to save the prophet, and in his person to give a figure of the resurrection, caused a large whale to swallow him alive, and at the end of three days, to cast him uninjured upon the sea shore. Then the prophet, instructed by his experience, accomplished his mission, and preached conversion to Ninive.* Our Lord assures us that Jonas, in the whale's belly, was a figure of himself, who was to arise on the third day. David also announces this mystery, when, in the name of the Messiah, he says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption."†

EXERCISES. — 1. What precautions did the Jews take to prevent the disciples from carrying away the body of Jesus Christ? — 2. How did these very precautions render the resurrection of our divine Lord more authentic? — 3. When and how did our Lord arise from the tomb? — 4. What incidents took place when Magdalene and the other holy women went to the sepulchre to embalm the body of their Master? — 5. Enumerate some of the apparitions of our divine Lord on the day of his resurrection.

CHAPTER VII.

ARTICLE 6.— "HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY."

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus Christ assembled his disciples on Mount Olivet, and having raised his

* See Jonas.

† Ps. xv, 10.

hands and blessed them, he ascended, in their presence, into Heaven. They continued to look after him, until a cloud intercepted their view; then two angels appeared to them, and told them that he would, one day, descend from Heaven, in the same way that they had seen him ascend. In saying that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God, his Father, we borrow from human things, a sensible image, in order to have it the more clearly understood, that the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ is raised to the highest degree of glory and power in Heaven, and that he rests, after his labors, on the throne of his eternal empire. When a king associates his son with him in the government of his kingdom, he places him on a throne by his side, to show that he wishes to have him regarded as his equal, and that all persons in his kingdom should render him the same respect and obedience which they pay to himself.

The Holy Scripture represents God to us seated upon his throne, as the Sovereign Lord and Master of the universe. When, then, we say, that Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of God, his Father, we are to understand, that being, as God, equal to his Father, he is, as man, by reason of his glory and power, raised above all created beings: his sacred humanity enjoying the glorious privilege of being united to the Eternal Word.

Our divine Lord, in the kingdom of his glory, is not unmindful of us: he is attentive to our wants; he exercises for us the office of Mediator, presenting to his Eternal Father the wounds he received in his passion, thereby to obtain his mercy for men; and shall not the voice of his blood be more powerful in obtaining that mercy, if we avail ourselves of its merits, than that of our sins in drawing down upon us the chastisement of Divine Justice? He is in Heaven as our King and Lord. he has sovereign dominion over us, not only because he has created and preserves us, but also because he has redeemed us. We belong to him, therefore, as his inheritance, his conquest, and the price of his blood.

Jesus Christ, in Heaven, is our High Priest. He exer-

cised this office on the cross, by offering himself to his Eternal Father, as a victim of propitiation for our sins: he exercises it now in Heaven, where, being at his right hand, he presents himself before Him; and, as he possesses an eternal priesthood, he can always save those who approach God through his mediation. Having, then, for High Priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, let us approach his throne with confidence, that we may find mercy, and the assistance of his grace in our necessities; for the High Priest that we have, is not one who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one who was tempted in all things like ourselves—yet without sin.* In fine, Jesus Christ in Heaven is our head; that is, he is the head of the body of which we are the members. This body is the Church, and Jesus Christ is to his Church, what the head is to the body; he gives it life, he animates it with his spirit: every grace, good thought, holy desire—every good work flows from the plenitude, which is in Christ, our head.

A gentleman, who was very fervent in the practice of his Christian duties, made a most edifying journey through the Holy Land. He first made his confession, and received, with great devotion, the sacrament of our Lord's Body. He then went to Nazareth, where our Lord became incarnate; to Bethlehem, where he was born; to the Jordan, in which he was baptized by St. John; to the desert, where he fasted for forty days; to Mount Tabor, where he was transfigured; to the supper-room, in Jerusalem, in which he instituted the Blessed Eucharist; to the Garden of Olives, the prætorium of Pilate, and the hill of Calvary, which were the theatres of his ignominies and sufferings; to the sepulchre, in which his body was laid, and from which he arose on the third day; and last of all, to Mount Olivet, where, after having blessed his Apostles, he ascended triumphantly into Heaven. At these different stations, full of the most lively faith, this fervent Christian honored the mysteries of our Lord's life upon earth, and his heart was inflamed with the most ardent love. Having now no

* Heb., iv. 15, 16.

farther to go, whilst he yet remained on Mount Olivet, he pronounced the following prayer, "O Jesus, Jesus, my most amiable Redeemer, where shall I now seek thee upon earth, since thou hast left it? Permit me to follow thee. Draw me up to Heaven, where thou now abidest!" No sooner had he concluded this prayer, than it was heard. He expired—dying of love for that Savior to whom he had been so tenderly devoted.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES.—1. When and how did Jesus Christ ascend into Heaven? — 2. What do you mean by saying that Jesus Christ sits at the *right hand* of God? — 3. What are the functions of the Son of God in the Kingdom of his glory? — 4. What rights has he over us as our King and Lord? — 5. Why do you say that Jesus Christ is our High Priest in Heaven? — 6. What relation does Jesus Christ in Heaven bear to his Church?

CHAPTER VIII.

ARTICLE 7.—"FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD."

SECTION I.

Of Death.

"It is appointed for men once to die."* There is nothing more certain than death; nothing more uncertain than the time at which it shall happen. We shall all die; that is, we shall quit this earth, and enter into eternity. We shall quit all: parents, friends, riches, honors, employments, without exception, and for ever. At death everything will also leave us, and nothing will accompany us but our vices or virtues. If the mere thought of death is so insupportable to the lovers of this world, how terrible must it be in itself! O terrible moment! which shall discover to them the emptiness of the things here below, which they so much loved, and the importance of those virtues, which they knew, perhaps, only to despise.

Nothing is more uncertain than the time and circum-

* Heb , ix, 27.

stances of death. Shall we die after a short life, or shall we arrive at old age? in the grace of God, or in sin? No one can tell; what is certain is, that we shall die, and probably as we shall have lived; that we shall gather what we will have sowed: for death is the echo of life. What is certain, besides, is, that death fixes our destiny, and decides our lot for eternity: if we die in the state of grace, we shall be eternally happy; if in the state of sin, we shall be for ever miserable.

Since, then, death is unavoidable, and must decide our lot for eternity, we ought to prepare assiduously for its coming, and profit of the time that yet remains to us. Our paramount interest, or rather, our only interest, is here concerned; for Jesus Christ has said, "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"* and what consolation will it be for a man, tormented in the fire of hell, to reflect that he was great, powerful, or prosperous, in this world? Ah! it is then, indeed, he will acknowledge that he was in error, and that there is no one truly rich, but he who is possessed of virtue. "I have been monarch of the greatest empire in the universe," said the Emperor Severus at his death; "I have been all that a mortal could be, and yet nothing now remains to me that can afford me the least comfort or service." The great Saladin caused a herald to go before him, carrying the winding-sheet in which he was to be buried, and proclaiming, "Behold all that shall remain to the mighty Saladin, out of the empires he has conquered!"

Trifling affairs are transacted without much application; great ones require much care and solicitude. As it is the mark of a little mind to occupy itself much with things that are trifling, it is the characteristic of a great one to give all its attention to those that are important. Our cares should always be proportioned to the value of the thing on which they are bestowed. Now what greater affair have we on hand than that of dying well? Is life too long to prepare for death? or are its few short years too many to occupy in preparation for eternity?

* Matt., xvi, 26.

A man condemned to death would make small account of the goods and honors of this life: such should be our dispositions. Death continually pursues and will infallibly overtake us, and that at a moment when, perhaps, we least think of it. As each day may be the last of our life, we should daily prepare for death. Let us not delude ourselves in a matter so momentous, nor defer our repentance from day to day; for "God," says St. Augustine, "who has promised the pardon of sin to a true conversion, has not promised to afford time for that conversion."—It is foolish—nay criminal, to postpone preparation for death till our last sickness. What! at a time when a person is incapable of transacting the most ordinary business, to think he can accomplish a work the most difficult, the most important, and that which, of all works, requires the greatest attention! How can he receive the sacraments with fruit, when he hardly knows what he is doing? How unburden his conscience, weighed down with iniquity, when all the faculties of his soul are absorbed by the pains and horrors of death? How prove to God that he detests the sin which he loved so long as he could procure its enjoyment? It is not, in reality, the sinner that then abandons sin, but the power of sinning that fails the sinner. Those who have lived in sin, God ordinarily suffers to die impenitent; and when it happens otherwise, it is a miracle of his mercy. God can, when He pleases, work this miracle; but it is a foolish and damnable presumption to lead a sinful life in expectation of such a miracle at death.

A young French officer who was obliged to leave his country, withdrew into Spain, and moved by the grace of God, resolved to consecrate the remainder of his life to preparation for death. Full of this design, he presented himself as a postulant at a religious house, remarkable for the austere and penitential lives of its inmates. His entreaties were earnest, and he obtained admission. During his novitiate he wrote to his sister in the following terms: "There is scarcely a beggar in Spain who is not better fed, clothed, and lodged, than we are, and yet not one amongst

us would exchange his condition for an empire, knowing well that death soon confounds the emperor with the meanest of his subjects, and that we carry nothing with us out of this world but our works. "Oh! how we shall rejoice for having sowed in tears! The labor is temporary—the repose which succeeds is eternal!" Five months after his profession, he was attacked with dropsy, which, in four months, terminated his earthly pilgrimage. Before his death, he was laid on straw and ashes, that he might die like a penitent. Taking the hand of the abbot, who stood beside him, he pressed it affectionately, and with a look of gratitude, which affected the whole community, said, "O father! how great is my happiness! In opening to me the door of this monastery, you opened to me the gate of Heaven. How I now rejoice that I have prepared for death! and oh! how sweet it is to die, when one has a firm hope of passing from earth to Heaven! Happy are they who comprehend well these words: *What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul!*"*

What subject of regret has the just man at death? Not the goods of the earth—his heart has always been detached from them; nor family and friends—for he knows that his separation from them shall be only temporary. "We shall meet again," said a young lady at the point of death to her disconsolate parents; "we shall meet again," She died pronouncing these words; and a beautiful monument was erected over her remains, on which she was represented writing on a pillar—*We shall meet again!*

A child, only seven years old, being at the point of death, said to his mother, whom he saw weeping by his bed-side, "Have you not taught me, mother, that to see God, I must die?"

EXERCISES. — 1. What terminates man's existence here below? — 2. What practical consequences may be drawn from the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time and manner thereof?—3. Show us that it is the height of rashness and folly to defer the preparation for death?

* Mark, xvi. 26

SECTION II.

Of Judgment.

“It is appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment.”* The soul being immortal, it necessarily follows that there must be a judgment, which will decide our lot for eternity; for the fate of the just and that of the impious cannot be alike. Faith teaches that this judgment will take place, and that it will be of two kinds—the *particular* and the *general*. The particular judgment is that which every one must undergo immediately after death, for the evil he has done, or the good he has omitted; and by this judgment his lot for eternity will be decided. Souls stained with venial guilt must expiate it in purgatory, before they can be admitted in Heaven; those who are entirely exempt from sin, will instantly take possession of the glory of the blessed; but those who die in the unexpiated guilt of mortal sin, will be cast into hell, to await the general resurrection at the end of the world. The general judgment will then take place, and in it will be manifested and confirmed, the sentence pronounced in the particular. The most awful signs will go before it, as our Lord himself has declared in his Gospel. There shall be wars, and rumors of wars, and famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes; the sun and moon shall be darkened; the stars shall fall from heaven;† the sea shall make a frightful noise by reason of the agitation of its waters; and men shall wither away with fear, in expectation of the evils which are to come upon the universe.‡ In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall arise.§ The sign of the Son of Man, that is, his cross, will appear in the heavens, and Jesus Christ will descend visibly in great power and majesty, to render to every one according to his works.|| He will be accompanied by his angels, who shall at once separate the good from the bad. “The angels,” says the Evangelist, “shall

* Heb., ix. 27.

† Matt., xxiv, 6, 7, 29.

‡ Luke, xxi, 25, 26.

§ 1 Cor., xv. 52.

|| Matt., xxiv, 30.

go out, and separate the wicked from among the just.* How terrific this separation! how different the lot of each! The just will be placed on the right hand of the Sovereign Judge, the wicked on his left.† Then the conscience of each one shall be manifested in the presence of the entire universe and those crimes that are now most hidden and secret, will then be revealed in all their enormity.

The just man who had been despised on earth, will appear ornamented with all the good works which he had so carefully concealed, and the sinner will be covered with confusion and shame, at the sight of the iniquities which he had hidden from men. Then will vice appear as it really is, with all the deformity and infamy which naturally belong to it. What joy will then be felt by the virtuous young man, who despised the language of sinners, and fled from the contagion of their wicked example! How will he then be indemnified for the combats he sustained, and the raillery which he endured for his faith! What despair, on the other hand, will seize the heart of the young libertine, when he shall see exposed, in the view of Heaven and earth, his most hidden crimes, and shall behold the objects of his ridicule numbered amongst the saints! How will he then abhor those vices which, during life, had charmed and seduced him!

But this is only the preparation—the prelude to the judgment. What impression must be produced by the sentence of the Sovereign Judge! All being in profound silence, the Son of God will address those on his right hand in these consoling words: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Then turning to the reprobate, he will say, “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”‡ The moment this decree is pronounced, the just shall ascend to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness with God and his angels; the wicked shall be precipitated into hell to burn forever, without the least hope of ever possessing the happiness

* Matt., xii, 49.

† Matt., xxv, 32, 33

‡ Matt., xxv, 34, 41.

they have forfeited. Let us, then, prevent this terrible judgment, and profit of the advice our Lord gives us in his Gospel: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare shall it come on all those that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man." *

A young man, who in his childhood had been trained up in piety under the care of a good and virtuous mother, yielded so far to the temptations of the devil, as to abandon himself to the most shameful irregularities. One good effect of his religious education, however, yet remained: though he was depraved in morals, he had not lost his respect for religion. One night, after a day on which he had been guilty of many grievous sins, he had a dream: he imagined that he was carried before the tribunal of God, and that he was unable to make any reply to the interrogatories put to him, or to offer any defence of the crimes laid to his charge. His confusion and terror were beyond description. Awaking from sleep, he was covered with a cold perspiration and his mind was filled with horror at the spectacle he had just witnessed. In a few moments, some of his family entered the room; but he said to them, "Leave me to myself; I have seen my Judge, O my God! grant me pardon." Some of the companions of his irregularities, hearing of his illness, came to visit and console him. "Begone," said he to them; "I know you no longer—I will never see you again—I have seen my Judge—All my crimes are written against me. Never, until now, did I know their number or enormity. The devil awaited but the signal to carry me away. My God! how I tremble! False friends, begone from me forever. How happy shall I be if I can appease my Judge by a life of rigid penance! From this moment I begin to serve Him. I shall soon, in

* Luke, xxi, 34, 35, 36.

reality, appear before his tribunal. It may be this very day. Pardon me, O my God! May I never cease to invoke thy mercy. Pardon me, O my God! have mercy on me; cast me not off forever.*

EXERCISES. — 1. What necessarily follows from the truth that the soul is immortal? — 2. What does faith teach us concerning this judgment? — 3. What do you understand by the particular judgment? — 4. What signs shall precede the general judgment? — 5. How shall the general judgment take place? — 6. What difference will be remarked between the just man and the sinner at the moment of the general judgment? — 7. By what terms does our divine Lord in his Gospel, advise us to prepare for the general judgment?

CHAPTER IX.

ARTICLE 8. — “ I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST. ”

It is not sufficient to believe in the Father Almighty, who created us, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who redeemed us; we must also believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctified us, as is evident from the words of St. Paul to some amongst the Ephesians.*

We must, then, with a firm faith, believe that in God there is a third person, the Holy Ghost. This third person proceeds from the Father and the Son, and has the same nature, the same divinity, as the other two persons. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, equal to the Father and to the Son: He is eternal, almighty, infinite; He has the same perfections; in a word, He is the same God, as the Father and the Son. It is in his name, as well as in that of the Father and the Son, that we are baptized; and, as He is one and the same God with Them, we owe Him the same adoration and homage. Hence, the Holy Ghost is adored and glorified conjointly with the Father and the Son, and we conclude all our prayers with these words: “ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”

This Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles, on the feast of Pentecost, in the form of tongues of fire. He filled them with courage and fortitude to preach the Gospel, and

* Acts, xix, 2.

to give evidence of its truth, by the effusion of their blood. He also communicated to them the gift of tongues, and the graces necessary for the establishment of the Church and the conversion of the world.*

The Holy Ghost is a *Spirit of Love*, who communicates to our souls that charity by which we are sanctified. To Him, then, is attributed, in a particular manner, the work of our sanctification. It is He who imparts to us sanctifying grace, which is the life of the soul; for our souls can have life only inasmuch as they are united to Him, and that his grace abides in, and animates, them. We are, of ourselves, totally incapable of any motion towards God, without his assistance; nor can we do anything whatever, in the order of salvation, but by his impulse and inspiration.

The Holy Ghost is called the *Spirit of Truth*, that is, the Source of all truth, and the Master who teaches it. It was He that, in an instant, filled the understanding of the Apostles with light, and imparted to them that knowledge of heavenly things necessary for the instruction of mankind. It was He that spoke by the Prophets and Evangelists. It is He that still instructs us, dissipating, by his light, the darkness of our ignorance, pointing out to us the path which leads securely to Heaven, and giving us strength and courage to walk therein. "Thy good spirit," said the Prophet, "shall lead me into the right land."† It is this Holy Spirit, in fine, that speaks interiorly to us, warning us against evil, and inclining us to good; and it is He whom we resist, when we reject the inspirations which incline us to avoid the one, and to embrace the other.

Simon the Magician had long seduced the people of Samaria by his practice of the magic art, and was called by his followers, *The Power of God*. When the Apostles St. Peter and St. John repaired to Samaria to confirm, by the imposition of hands, the newly baptized, who had been converted by the preaching and miracles of St. Philip the Deacon, Simon also believed in Christ, and received Baptism. Seeing the wonders which were operated by the

* Acts, ii, 4.

† Ps., cxlii, 10.

Apostles on those who had received the Holy Ghost, he presumptuously sought to obtain the power of imposing hands on the people, with the design of turning to his own glory and advantage the miracles he hoped to perform. He, therefore, offered money to St. Peter, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." St. Peter replied, "Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Do penance."* Far from taking the advice of the Apostle, he gave himself anew to the practice of magic, abandoned himself to all kinds of irregularities, and became the secret enemy of the Apostles. Having infected Samaria with the most extravagant errors, he went to Rome, where he wished to pass for a god. He promised the emperor Nero, who protected him, that he would raise himself in the air, in presence of the people, as a proof of his being a divinity. On the day appointed, a multitude of people assembled, and Simon raised himself, or rather was raised on high by the power of the devil; but St. Peter had recourse to prayer, and was immediately heard, for the power of the devil was withdrawn, and the unfortunate man fell to the ground, and was so bruised by the fall, that he died immediately. From this Simon is derived the word *simony*, a detestable sin, which is committed by those who purchase or sell the gifts of the Holy Ghost.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. Is it sufficient for us to believe in the Father and the Son? — 2. Who is the Holy Ghost? — 3. What effects did the descent of the Holy Ghost produce on the Apostles? — 4. Why do we attribute to the Holy Ghost the sanctification of our soul? — 5. Why is the Holy Ghost styled the *Spirit of Truth*?

CHAPTER X.

ARTICLE 9.—I BELIEVE "THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH;
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

SECTION I.

Of the Establishment of the Church.

The Church has existed from the beginning of the

* Acts, viii, 19, 20, 22.

world; that is, there have at all times been men who have made profession of their belief in God, who have adored and served Him, and have hoped for salvation through the merits of the Messiah. The adorers of the true God did not, however, always form a society, united by exterior, or visible bonds. The Jews were the only nation, before the coming of our Redeemer, who, in quality of God's chosen people, had a law and religious exercises in common. But Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save all men, has given them new means of salvation; he wishes that all be united, so as to form one body, and he has imparted to them a new law, the law of grace.

The Apostles, having received the Holy Ghost, came forth from the house in which they had shut themselves up, and announced in the midst of Jerusalem, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Three thousand Jews were converted at the first sermon of St. Peter, and five thousand at the second. The number of the faithful increased daily, and these men, regenerated by Baptism, and renewed by the Holy Spirit, presented to the world a spectacle of the purest and most perfect virtue. The Apostles soon after preached the Gospel throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; thence they passed into Syria, and the provinces of Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and almost through the entire world, announcing everywhere the Gospel, that is, the *good news* of the redemption of man, by the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The Jews, however, remained obstinate in their opposition to the Gospel, and cruelly persecuted those who embraced it. Infidels, on the other hand, used every effort to prevent its establishment. The great and powerful amongst them, declared themselves, from the beginning, its most implacable enemies; yet, notwithstanding the fury of the Jews, the opposition of the powerful, and the general corruption of the people,—long attached to a religion altogether sensual,—the Apostles established, throughout the world, the Church of Jesus Christ. Those whom they made choice of as their successors in the ministry, imitated their zeal, and transmitted, in like

manner, to their successors, the sacred deposit of the faith, which has thus been handed down from age to age, to the present time, in all its original purity.

To form an idea of what an admirable work the establishment of Christianity was, we should consider that it was effected by twelve men of low condition, without education, property, or influence, and to whom their Master had promised no other portion in this world, than persecutions, sufferings, and martyrdom :—such were the Apostles. Can any one suppose that twelve men of this character, if not animated by the Spirit of God, would not have shrunk from undertaking to change the face of the universe, to convert all nations—Greeks and Romans, Jews and Pagans—and that, too, by proposing to them the most incomprehensible mysteries, and the strictest morality? Yet these twelve men, thus destitute of all human succor,—with no other arms than the cross, no other means than the word, no other defence than patience under every trial, not only formed this extraordinary design, but actually carried it into execution. They preached a doctrine which captivated the mind, and won the heart: they preached it in the midst of the Roman Empire, in the principal cities,—cities the richest, the most learned, and the most voluptuous,—in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and even in Rome itself. Every effort was made to oppose this new doctrine; everything done to stifle Christianity in its very birth, and to arrest its progress,—confiscation, exile, imprisonment, torture; and yet Christianity was established in all parts of the world by the force of mere persuasion, notwithstanding all the opposition of the powers of this world, and all the means for its destruction, which human wisdom, supported by passion, interest, policy, and the most extravagant violence, could invent.

To abandon a religion, ordaining practices painful to nature, and proscribing every vice, in order to embrace one favorable to the senses, and which would give a free scope to the passions, is a thing easily comprehended; but to abjure a religion favorable to the passions, in order to

embrace the cross and penance, and to expose oneself to the loss of property and life,—is what conviction alone could effect; and this is what it did really effect at the establishment of the Christian religion. Surely we cannot help exclaiming, *The finger of God is here!* for either the Apostles performed miracles to prove to the people the truth of what they announced, or they convinced them without miracles. If they performed miracles, then it was God himself who presided over this work; and if they persuaded the world without miracles, the proof would still be the stronger; it was a divine power alone which could establish this persuasion in the minds of men, despite of all the obstacles opposed to it. “The conversion of the world effected without miracles, would be, itself, the greatest of miracles.”

Victorinus, a celebrated orator, was a professor of rhetoric in Rome. He had passed his life in the study of the liberal arts; had read and examined almost all the writings of the ancient philosophers; and was master of all the learning most prized amongst the Roman senators. He had exercised his profession with so much success and reputation, that his statue was erected in one of the public places in Rome; and this was one of the highest honors to which a man could then aspire. He was, however, still a pagan, and a worshipper of idols, and not only did he adore them himself, but he even employed his eloquence to engage others in this impious worship. How great the grace which could touch and convert a heart like his! Victorinus began to read the Holy Scriptures, and soon after to study them attentively; he read other books also, which treated of the Christian religion. He one day waited on St. Simplician, with whom he had been intimate, and said to him, “I have news with which I am sure you will be pleased; I am a Christian.” “I cannot believe it,” said St. Simplician, “and shall not, until I see you in the Church, joining in the prayers of the faithful.” “What?” replied Victorinus, “is it by being shut up within walls, that a man is known to be a Christian?” Every time that

he protested he was a Christian, **Simplician** made the same observation, which was followed by a similar answer.

The fear which **Victorinus** entertained of incurring the displeasure of his friends, and which he knew would prove his destruction if once excited, retained him still in the bosom of infidelity; but his courage and generosity soon triumphed over this difficulty. He became convinced that it would be a heinous crime to be ashamed of the mysteries of **Jesus Christ**, and yet feel no shame at the horrible superstitions of paganism. Feeling one day a more than ordinary determination to embrace the Gospel, he waited on **Simplician**, and said to him, "Let us go to the Church; I am resolved not only to be a Christian, but openly to appear such." **Simplician**, filled with joy, instantly accompanied him, and placed his name on the list of those who desired Baptism. The whole city was filled with astonishment and admiration at this wonderful conversion, the high reputation of **Victorinus** adding considerably to the universal joy which was diffused among the faithful.

The happy day, destined for the public profession of faith, previous to Baptism, at length arrived. The custom of the Roman Church was, that the formula should be committed to memory, and pronounced with a loud voice, in the presence of all the faithful. The Priests, through deference to **Victorinus**, offered to permit him to pronounce it in private, a favor which was ordinarily granted only to the timid; but **Victorinus** wished to profess aloud, and in the presence of all the people, the heavenly doctrine which leads to salvation. When he appeared in the Church, a sudden transport of joy filled all who were present; and, although each endeavored to moderate it through respect for the place and ceremony, yet a low whispering was heard on every side: "It is **Victorinus**! it is **Victorinus**!" Anxiety to hear him produced a profound silence; when he, full of a holy courage, pronounced in a loud and distinct voice, the truths which are the objects of our faith. Every one in the assembly was desirous of pressing him to his heart, and expressing the joy which he experienced in beholding him a Christian. This remarkable conversion

was productive of the most happy consequences; and when St. Augustine, then a Manichee, heard it mentioned by St. Simplician, he acknowledged that he felt strongly disposed to follow the example. This he did soon after, when he was received into the Church by St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.

We should learn from the conversion of this great man first,—not to hesitate to correspond with the divine grace, the moment we receive its inspiration, lest through our infidelity we may cause it to be withdrawn; secondly,—to repair, by some heroic act of virtue, the infidelities and resistance with which we may have hitherto opposed it; and thirdly,—to be the more faithful in future, in proportion as our correspondence with it was the longer delayed. —*Vide CONF. S. AUG. l. viii.*

EXERCISES.—1. Has the Church always existed? — 2. What were the happy results of the Apostles' first preaching? — 3. What obstacles did they encounter in preaching the Gospel? — 4. How may we form an idea of the admirable work of the establishment of Christianity? — 5. Show that the establishment of Christianity was not a human invention. — 6. Were the obstacles opposed to its establishment very great?

SECTION II.

Of the Church.—Constancy of the Martyrs.

The persecution against the Church of Jesus Christ ended not with the lives of the Apostles; for three hundred years all the powers of earth continued to make war upon it. No fewer than ten general persecutions were raised by the Roman Emperors during this period, in which thousands of Christians of every age, sex, and condition, suffered torments and death, in testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ. Every species of torture that the malice of man could invent or the fury of hell suggest was tried in order to force them to renounce their religion. Some were stretched upon racks, with their hands and feet fastened with cords; others were hung up by the arms, with weights attached to their feet; and, in this condition, they were with iron-pointed whips, until their

sides and entrails were laid bare. When they did not expire under these torments, salt and vinegar were applied to their wounds, in order to render them the more painful; at other times these wounds were again opened, when they began to heal. The prisons became, for the Christians, a new mode of punishment; and for them the most infected were reserved. Into these prisons they were cast naked—their feet bound and their wounds yet bleeding,—with no other bed than the dungeon-floor, thickly strewed with pieces of broken glass. Sometimes they were left to die of hunger; and when food was given them, it was only with the intention of reserving them for greater punishment. They were ordinarily not permitted to converse with any one, because it was known, that in this state, they converted many infidels to the faith, and, in some instances, the very gaoler and guards, to whose keeping they were consigned. The punishment which usually put an end to these tortures, was to be beheaded, or burnt alive, or precipitated into the sea, or devoured by wild beasts. The martyrs, notwithstanding, remained firm and unshaken, their very torments serving but to increase their courage and resolution. Nor was it by men alone that this astonishing constancy was exhibited; delicate women, and even young children, were equally firm and courageous; so powerful was the grace of Jesus Christ, which strengthened and sustained them.

Ecclesiastical History furnishes us with examples of heroism, which were not only above human strength, but even beyond our admiration. We cannot, without astonishment, read of the sufferings of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius; or what is reported by Eusebius of the martyrs of Palestine, and by Sozomen of those of Persia; or what is found in the original acts of the martyrs of Africa. All these generous combatants—the bare mention of whose torments causes one to shudder—suffered with invincible patience; many suffered even with joy, and of their own accord, presented themselves to their persecutors, fearing that they might possibly be spared, and thus be deprived of the martyr's crown. St. Lawrence, extended on his gridiron, told his

executioners to turn his body on the other side, as the fire could do no further injury to that which was already burned. What language while suffering the most excruciating torments! Whence came that invincible courage, which enabled those Christian heroes to brave torments and death? Who endued them with strength so superior to whatever the cruelty of tyrants could invent? A *divine* power it was, without doubt, which thus fortified their natural weakness; and, therefore, the religion is *divine* which the martyrs cemented with their blood. Never could it have survived attacks so violent and so multiplied, had it not been sustained by an almighty hand. Every effort made for its destruction served but to fortify and confirm it; and the more cruel the persecution, the more widely did the faith extend. The blood of the martyrs, as a fruitful seed, brought forth new children to the Church; and the world, which had furiously persecuted the disciples of Jesus Christ, was forced to cry out, "How great is the God of the Christians!" and, finally, to embrace the religion for which the martyrs bled.

The Emperor Valens, who was an Arian, forbade, under pain of death, the Christians of Edessa, where he then was, to exercise publicly any act of religion. The Catholics, far from yielding obedience to this unjust and impious mandate, continued to assemble at their usual place of worship. The emperor hearing of this disobedience, ordered the prefect of the city to go, on the following morning, to the place where they assembled, and put to death all he could find. The prefect, who was favorably disposed towards the Christians, privately acquainted them with the order he had received, and which he durst not disobey, hoping hereby to prevent them from incurring the threatened danger. Far, however, from keeping them at home, this intimation served but to increase their desire of being present, rejoicing at the favorable opportunity thus presented them, of giving their lives for Jesus Christ. At the appointed hour, the prefect set out, accompanied by a number of soldiers. Passing through one of the

streets which led to the place in which the Christians assembled, he saw a young woman with a child by the hand, walking hastily in the same direction. "Whither are you going?" said he, addressing her. "I am going," she replied, "to where the Catholics are assembled." "Stop, woman!" said the prefect, "do you not know that I am going, by the emperor's order, to put to the sword all I shall find there?" "I know it well," she answered, "and for that reason I hasten thither with my only child, that we both may have the happiness to die for Jesus Christ!" The prefect, struck with admiration at such wonderful magnanimity, returned to the emperor, and told what had transpired. Valens, confounded, and filled with admiration at the heroic constancy of this people, soon after departed from their city, and the Catholics enjoyed, unmolested, the free exercise of their religion. — ECCLIASTICAL HISTORY.

EXERCISES. — 1. Did the persecutions, raised up against the Church, terminate at the death of the Apostles? — 2. Were these persecutions numerous and how long did they last? — 3. Enumerate some of the tortures invented to force the Christians to renounce their religion — 4. What was the conduct of the Martyrs amidst these exoruciating torments? — 5. Was this marvellous constancy exhibited by men only?

SECTION III.

Of the Marks of the Church.

The Church is the congregation, or society, of the faithful, who profess the same doctrine, partake of the same sacraments, and are governed by divinely-constituted pastors, under one visible head, who is Bishop of Rome, and Vicar and representative of the invisible head.—Jesus Christ. As there are many societies which usurp the title of churches, we should know well the marks which distinguish the true Church from those which are churches only in name. There are four marks, or characters, by which the true Church of Christ can easily and infallibly be distinguished from all separate congregations. These marks, or characters, are,—*unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity.*

1. The Church is *one*, because there is but one Church

in which salvation can be found, and because all the members who compose it profess the same faith, participate in the same sacraments, are animated by the same spirit, reciprocally love one another with the same charity, aspire to the same end, and are obedient to the same pastors. This mark of *unity* in the true Church is abundantly evident from many passages in Holy Writ. Our Savior, speaking of himself in the character of the Good Shepherd, says: "Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." * Again, addressing his heavenly Father, previous to his Passion, he says: "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee." † St. Paul emphatically inculcates the *unity* of the Church, in his Epistles. St. Cyprian, the great light of the third century, treating of the unity of the Church, writes as follows:—"There is but one God, and one Christ, and one faith, and a people joined in one solid body with the cement of concord. This *unity* cannot suffer a division, nor this one body bear to be disjointed.—He cannot have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother. If any one could escape the deluge out of Noah's ark, he who is out of the Church may also escape. To abandon the Church is a crime which blood cannot wash away." St. Augustine is equally strong. "All the assemblies, or rather divisions, that call themselves churches of Christ, but which, in fact, have separated themselves from the congregation of *unity*, do not belong to the true Church. They might, indeed, belong to her, if the Holy Ghost could be divided against himself; but as this is impossible, they do *not* belong to her."

2. The Church is *holy* because her doctrine and sacraments are holy; all who have been recognized as saints were members of her communion, and Jesus Christ, her invisible Head, is the Author and Source of all grace and sanctity. That *sanctity* is a distinctive mark of the Church, plainly follows from the Apostles' Creed, and also from

* John, x, 16.

† John, xvii, 20, 21.

these words of St. Peter: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people."*

3. The Church is *catholic*, or universal, as to *time*, *place*, and *doctrine*. It embraces all time, for it has existed without interruption from the beginning, and will subsist to the consummation of ages, in virtue of the promise given by our divine Redeemer to his Church in the persons of the Apostles. "Behold," says he, "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."† The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the Messiah and his spiritual kingdom, the Church, points out and foretells this universality as to time. "His power is an everlasting power, which shall not be taken away; and his kingdom, that shall not be destroyed."‡ Other societies bear on their front, if we may so speak, the evidence of their novelty; the very date of their origin is accurately determined—an evident proof that they are not the true Church of Jesus Christ. "What new heresy," says St. Vincent of Lerins, "ever sprouted up, without bearing the name of its founder, the date of its origin," &c. The Church embraces all places; the faithful who compose it are spread throughout the world, whilst the members of the other denominations are confined to certain countries. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."§ "Ask of Me," says the Father to his divine Son, "and I will give Thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession."|| "O happy Church! O happy Church!" exclaims the great St. Augustine, "raise up thine eyes, and take a survey of the universal world; and behold thine inheritance which reacheth to the uttermost bounds of the earth." The Church, besides, being more extended than the other societies styling themselves Christians, bears everywhere the distinguishing name of *catholic*; a name by which she

* 1 Pet., ii, 9.

† Matt., xxviii, 20.

‡ Dan., vii, 14.

§ Mal., i, 11.

|| Ps. ii, 8.

is designated even by her enemies. "We are Catholic Christians," says St. Augustine; "we must hold to the Christian religion, and to that Church which is called Catholic, not only by her members, but even by all her enemies, for they are not understood, if they do not distinguish her by that name with which she is designated by the whole world." In fine, she is universal as to her doctrine, as the experience of eighteen centuries amply attests. She teaches her children to observe *all* that God has commanded, "teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you." *

4. The true Church is *apostolic* because she has come down by a perpetual succession from the Apostles, from whom she has her doctrine, orders, and mission. The Catholic Church alone can lay claim to these glorious features of *apostolicity*. "She was built," says St. Paul, "upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." † The other societies having separated themselves from the true Church, have lost that succession. Every one, then, can easily know if he is a member of the true Church, by examining whether he is united to the Pope, by means of his own Pastor and Bishop. The true Church is also visible and plain to every eye. We perceive, everywhere, a society that professes the same faith, believes the same mysteries, receives the same sacraments, and acknowledges the divine origin of the authority of its ministers. The Church is also called *Roman*, because the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, and Bishop of Rome, is its visible head.

St. Ireneus, Bishop of Lyons, who had been a disciple of St. Polycarp, addressing Florinus, a propagator of errors contrary to the doctrine of the Church, said: "Your doctrine is not that of the Bishops who were before us. I seem to hear the blessed Polycarp recount the conversation he had with John and the others who had seen the Lord, and recite to us what they had learned of his doctrine and miracles. I can assure you, that if this holy Bishop heard

* Matt., xxviii, 20.

† Ephes., ii, 20.

the doctrine which you preach, he would instantly close his ears, and exclaim, as was his custom, 'Good God! that I should be reserved till these times to hear such things!' — and so saying, would instantly retire."—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is the Church? — 2. What are the marks that distinguish the true Church from those which are churches only in name? — 3. Why do we say that the Church is *one*? — 5. What passages in Holy Writ are evidences of the *unity* of the Church? — 6. What does St. Cyprian say of the *unity* of the Church? — 7. What language does St. Augustine use on the same subject? — 8. Why is the Church *holy*? — 9. How is the Church *catholic*? — 10. What does the Prophet Daniel foretell of her universality as to time? — 11. Malachy, as to space? — 12. Why is the Church *apostolic*? — 13. How may one know that is of the true Church? — 14. Why is the Church called Roman?

SECTION IV.

Of the Authority of the Church.

Jesus Christ gave to the pastors of the Church the power of instructing and governing the faithful in the way of salvation. "Going, therefore," said he to his Apostles, "teach ye all nationsteaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."*

The Apostle St. Paul calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth."† The body of the pastors, joined with their head, cannot possibly err in what concerns faith and morals, the judgment which they pronounce respecting either, are, therefore, infallible decisions, to which all the faithful are bound to yield obedience. The Church is the chair of truth: it speaks to men in the name of God, by the authority and assistance of God; and when they submit to its teaching and decisions, it is to God himself they yield the homage of their faith. "He that heareth you, heareth me," said our Lord to his Apostles; "and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."‡ "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the

* Matt., xxviii, 19, 20.

† 1 Tim., iii, 15

‡ Luke, x, 16.

publican."* The voice of the pastors is, then, the voice of God himself. The Apostles, conscious of the power which they had received from Jesus Christ, commenced their first decree in these remarkable words: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us:"†—instructing us thereby, that the judgment which they pronounced, was the judgment of God. That Jesus Christ should give to his Church this infallible authority, was a matter of absolute necessity. If there were no tribunal to decide authoritatively the questions that might be raised, as to what ought or ought not to be believed, the faithful would bewilder themselves in their own imagination, nor would uniformity in belief, for any length of time, subsist amongst them. If this tribunal were not infallible, the truth of its decisions might be questioned; and the faithful, involved in doubt and perplexity, would be liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine.

Jesus Christ has given to the pastors of his Church power to govern the faithful: this power of jurisdiction is that which is exercised by the Pope and by the Bishops. The Pope is the successor of St. Peter, and the heir of all his power and authority. He is, under Jesus Christ, the supreme head and pastor of the Church—the supreme judge and lawgiver, in all things relating to faith, morals, and discipline. The primacy, both of honor and jurisdiction, over all the other Bishops, belongs to him; and all persons are bound to pay the greatest respect, veneration, and obedience to his decrees and orders in all things belonging to religion. The Bishops are the successors of the other Apostles. They have the power—1, of remitting sin, which power they can communicate to the Priests, to be exercised by them with such limitations as they may prescribe;—2, of binding and loosing, that is, retaining and forgiving sin, and of remitting the penalties incurred by sin;—3, of governing the faithful according to the doctrine and discipline of the Church. By the discipline of the Church, is meant, such regulations as the Church, by the authority which Jesus Christ has confided to her, ordains

* Matt.. xviii. 17.

† Acts. xv.. 28.

relative to the conduct of clergy and laity; and such usages and ceremonies as she ordains for the due performance of religious worship. This power of jurisdiction which resides in the principal ministers of Jesus Christ and pastors of the Church, extends only to members of the Church, and not to those who are entirely and notoriously separated from it, such as **p**igans and unbelievers.

During the time of the schism in Antioch, St. Jerome, in his desert, was asked with which of the contending parties he held communion. Being in doubt as to which he should join, he wrote to Pope Damasus in these words: "Following no other head than Jesus Christ, I am attached to the communion of your Holiness, that is, to the chair of Peter. **Upon this rock, I know that the Church was built. Whoever eats the lamb out of this house is profane; whoever is not in the ark will perish in the flood; whoever gathereth not with you, scattereth.** I, therefore, beg of you to point out to me with whom I shall hold communion." The Sovereign Pontiff attended to the prayer of St. Jerome, and, in consequence of the instructions he had received from Rome, this illustrious doctor joined in communion with Paulinus, who ordained him Priest. Humble submission to the decisions of the Church is the only means of avoiding errors in faith.

EXERCISES. — 1. What power did Jesus Christ confer on his Church? — 2. How may the infallibility of the Church be proved? — 3. Why should we believe all that the Church teaches? — 4. Why was it necessary that the Church should be infallible? — 5. Does the Church possess the right to make laws? — 6. How are they punished who violate these laws? — 7. What is the greatest ecclesiastical penalty? — 8. On what authority is the power which the Church has to remit sin founded?

SECTION V.

Out of the True Church there is no Salvation.

There is not, perhaps, a form of words which, for the last two centuries, has been more abused than this,—*Out of the True Church there is no salvation*; and yet there is no truth more easily proved. What we shall here say on this im-

important subject, will show that the Catholic Church must necessarily profess this doctrine, and that she is not, on this account, chargeable with intolerance.

There is but one God; man, as his creature, is obliged to obey Him, that is, to do his will, and honor Him in the manner which He himself has prescribed. This truth, in its ordinary acceptation, would alone be sufficient to prove that there is but one religion, one Church, out of which there is no salvation.

Every religion that believes itself the true one, should be able to say: "My founder is from God, or rather is God himself: his ambassadors have given unquestionable proofs of the divinity of their mission. The truths I propose are the only ones which have come from Him; the virtues I command are those alone which leads to Him." Any religion which cannot hold this language, proves that it does not believe itself true. And is it not natural for those who are in the right way, to say to those who do not follow them: "You are going astray; the path you follow will lead to your destruction"? This, in fact, is the language which has been held by all religions. We know with what fury the pagans persecuted the Christians; we know the injuries and the slanders with which heretics have assailed the Catholic Church. Every religion, then, has pretended that, out of its own bosom, there is no salvation. Every religion has, therefore, been intolerant in this sense, that it could not approve of what was contrary to its own belief. Shall we, then, say that all religions are good? This would be to advance the grossest absurdity, and to maintain the affirmative and the negative on the same subject. But shall we say they are all false, in order to free ourselves from being subject to any? He who would speak thus, would be most *unreasonable*, since he would deny the existence of natural religion, that is, of the bonds which unite an intelligent creature with the Being who created him; the most *foolhardy*, denying incontestable facts, believed by the whole universe, and which are convincing evidence that God has spoken to man; the most *intolerant*, since he would proscribe all belief, and condemn all religious prac

tics by which men have always rendered homage to the Divinity.

But if it is evident to a reasonable being that there must be a religion, it is equally evident that there can be but *one* alone that bears the character of truth; *one* alone with which God can be pleased; *one* alone which leads to happiness. Surely, he who does not acknowledge the Supreme Being who created him, or who outrages that Being by a criminal life, cannot have the same lot as he who loves and adores Him, and promotes his glory by the sanctity of his life: error and truth, vice and virtue, cannot have the same end, nor lead to the same happiness. There must be, then, but *one* religion, and *one* Church.

Which, then, of all these religions should we acknowledge the true one? which should we embrace to secure our salvation?—Doubtless, that which gives the most decided proofs of the sanctity of its doctrine, and the divinity of its institution; that which has been announced by the Prophets and confirmed by miracles; that, in fine, which Jesus Christ has established, and which has been regularly transmitted to us, through every succeeding age, by the successors of the Apostles. But it is the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, which alone possesses these prerogatives.

It is, then, true to say, that there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church, for she alone possesses all the characteristics of a divinely-revealed religion; no salvation for him who, knowing the truth, lives not in accordance with its dictates, and dies impenitent; no salvation for him who could discover the truth, and makes no effort to discover it; no salvation for any one out of the pale of the Church, who has just reason to doubt the truth of his religion, and yet neglects the means necessary for ascertaining where that truth can be found.

It is not the Church which damns those who do not profess her doctrine or practise her morality; no, they are the cause of their own destruction, by their wilful obstinacy in rejecting the truth. The Church damns no one; it announces that truth is *one*, and that those who wilfully

depart from it, are out of the way of salvation. The Church weeps over the blindness of such persons, and prays earnestly for their conversion; but she leaves to the Searcher of hearts to judge of the uprightness of their intention, and to see whether their ignorance is really culpable, and whether they are accountable for their breach of that precious unity, which forms the essential characteristic of truth.

But it may be asked, what is to become of so many children who die without Baptism? of so many pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and other unbelievers? As to the condition of the children who die without Baptism, the Holy Scripture does not speak of it, nor does the Church define anything concerning it. The Church, indeed, teaches that they cannot enter Heaven, but she does not teach that they will be subject to the same punishment as those who have offended by their own actual transgressions. We know, for certain, that they shall not enjoy the beatific vision of God, but we are not obliged to believe that they shall feel the full bitterness of that privation. As to those persons who have an opportunity of knowing the true religion, and yet will not embrace it, they shall with justice be condemned; but if any one is so circumstanced that it is absolutely impossible for him to know the truth, and that he observes faithfully the law of nature engraven on the hearts of all men, we may believe that God would rather perform a miracle than leave such a one in error. Thus does the Church repel the imputation of intolerance.

But whence comes this ardent interest, which the incredulous seem to bear towards infidels, and those who are not enlightened by the faith? Whence is it that, affecting to believe, and lamenting and complaining of their condemnation, they abuse the means of salvation which God has given them? Either their complaints are unjust, and dictated solely by their hatred of the Church, or their conduct is foolish. Why, we may say to them with St. Paul, why lose time in examining what God will do with people who do not participate in our belief? Occupy yourselves rather with uprooting the evil which is within

you, and which may in the end lead to your everlasting ruin. Be persuaded, that God will be sufficiently good not to damn those who will have sincerely sought the truth, in order to embrace it; as He will be sufficiently just to punish those who will have abused the lights and graces with which He has favored them. "Hail, true Church!" cries out one who had for many years been in doubt as to the choice of a religion, "O thou! who art alone the way that leads to life; may my soul repose under the shadow of thy branches. Far from me be the temerity which would attempt to penetrate the depth of thy mysteries, and the impiety which would insult their obscurity. What the unbeliever reasons on, I admire; what he disputes, I believe; I see the height, but I cannot penetrate the depth of the mysteries which have been revealed to us."

Before her marriage with Charles of Austria, afterwards emperor, under the title of Charles VI., the princess Elizabeth Christina Wolfenbuttel, felt it a duty, for the tranquillity of her conscience, to consult, concerning matters of religion, the Lutherans, whose form of belief she had till then professed. The Protestant doctors being assembled at Helmstadt, told her that a person could be saved in the Catholic communion, the Catholics not being in error as to the essentials of religion. The princess said, on learning their decision, "This being so, there is no longer time for hesitation: to-morrow I will embrace the Catholic religion; the securest course in a matter so important is always the wisest." The father of the princess adopted the same sentiments, and, like her, became a Catholic.—DE TREVERN.

Henry IV. of France, pressed by his friends to embrace the Catholic religion, inquired of the Bishops, if a person could be saved in the Catholic Church. They, of course, replied, that assuredly one could be saved in it; and further, that out of its bosom there was no ordinary possibility of salvation. The king next addressed himself to the Protestant ministers, and demanded whether salvation could be found in their reform, as in the Catholic Church.

They replied, that salvation could be found in either. "Well, then," rejoined the monarch, "the Bishops say that out of the Catholic Church there is no salvation, and you acknowledge that salvation is attainable therein: I, therefore, declare myself a Catholic."

EXERCISES — 1. Mention the truth which, in its ordinary acceptation, would alone be sufficient to prove that there is but one Church out of which there is no salvation. — 2. What should every religion, that believes itself the true one, be able to say? — 3. What has every religion pretended? — 4. Why can we not say that all religions are *good or false*? — 5. Show us that there can be but *one* religion. — 6. Which, of all these religions, should we acknowledge as the true one? — 7. What important consequences spring from the above arguments? — 8. Is it the Church that damns those who do not profess her doctrine or practise her morality? — 9. Whence comes the ardent interest which the incredulous seem to bear towards infidels? — 10. What advice does St. Paul give these persons?

SECTION VI.

Of the Communion of Saints.

All the faithful who compose the Catholic Church are united together, and form one body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. The strict union of all the members of this body, establishes between them a community of spiritual goods; and this is what is understood by the Communion of Saints.

The faithful are named *saints*, because they have been sanctified by Baptism, and are called to the profession and practice of holiness. The spiritual goods which are common among them, are the infinite graces which our Lord has merited for us by his sufferings, the merits of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints, the sacraments, the prayers and other good works which are performed in the Church. All these spiritual goods form a treasure which belongs to the whole Church, and in which every one of the faithful is entitled to participate in proportion to his dispositions. Those who are in the state of grace participate fully in all the gifts and graces which form this treasure. This community of spiritual goods is a consequence of the unity of the Church. All the members of a family labor for

its profit, and share in its advantages. It is the same with the Church, whose members compose but one and the same family, one and the same body. St. Paul compares the Church to the human body, and no comparison can more properly make us understand what is meant by the Communion of Saints. The body has many members, and each member, its particular function; but all these members together form only one body. They have all one and the same head, the same soul, the same life. The functions of the several members, their advantages, are for the good of the entire body; all concur to the same end, the preservation of that body;—the eyes see, the ears hear, the hands perform, the feet walk, for the entire body; in a word, all the members conspire for the good of one another, and give to each, in its necessities, all the assistance of which they are capable. Just so in the Church, all the faithful are animated by the same spirit, under the same head, and are united together in their different actions. Each prays, labors, merits, for the entire body, and receives, at the same time, a share in the labors, virtues, and prayers, of the entire Church. St. Ambrose, explaining these words of the Psalmist, "I am a partaker with all them that fear Thee," observes, "As we say that a member is partaker of the entire body, so are we partakers with all that fear God."* But to profit of these advantages, we must be members of the Church: those who are separated from her by heresy, schism, or apostacy; or those whom she has cast off from her bosom by excommunication, have no share in the spiritual advantages which the faithful possess, in virtue of the Communion of Saints.

To enjoy fully all these spiritual goods, we must be living members of the Church; that is, we must be in the state of grace. Sinners, in whom the Holy Ghost dwells not, are indeed members of the Church; but they are dead members; and how can dead members pretend to the same advantages as those that are living? A dead arm, though it may remain united to the human body, cannot receive nourishment, and is incapable of growth, motion, or action.

* S. Ambr., *Sermon* 8, Ps. cxviii, 63.

Sinners, however, derive much benefit from their union with the rest of the body; and it is, of itself, a great advantage to be a member of this society, in which alone are found truth, justice, charity, and salvation and the means of attaining it. A sinner is dead; but so long as he remains united to the body, he may again live, the prayers of the Church being continually offered to beg for his return to life, by true repentance. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, treating on how far the Communion of Saints conduces to the advantage of those members of the Church who are bound in the fetters of sin, says, that though they are as "dead members, deprived of the vivifying principle which is communicated to the just and pious Christian; yet, being in the Church, they are assisted in recovering lost grace and life, by those who are animated by the Spirit of God, and are in the enjoyment of those fruits which are, no doubt, denied to such as are entirely cut off from the communion of the Church."

The faithful who form the Church, are divided into three branches; the *Church militant*, which is composed of those who are still combating on earth against all the enemies of salvation; the *Church triumphant*, consisting of all the blessed in Heaven; and the *Church suffering*, which is composed of those who are yet expiating their sins, before their entrance into Heaven. The faithful who are on earth, are not only united among themselves, but are also united with the saints who triumph in Heaven, and with the souls who are suffering in purgatory. We rejoice in the happiness of the Saints; we bless God for it; and we pray to them to intercede for us; the Saints, on their side, love us as their brethren, and pray to God in our behalf. We offer prayers to God for the souls in purgatory; we give alms, and perform other good works, that God, in his mercy, may mitigate their sufferings, or shorten their duration.

St. Fructuosus, a Bishop of the third century, never ceased to pray for the entire Church. When he was on the point of suffering martyrdom—having been condemned

to be burned alive for the faith—a Christian, who was present, took him by the hand, and said to him, “I beg of you to remember me before God.” The holy martyr replied, “I ought to bear in mind the universal Catholic Church, extending from the east to the west.” St. Polycarp prayed night and day for the Catholic Church, spread throughout the whole world.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES—1. What means the Communion of Saints?—2. Why are the faithful styled *saints*?—3. What are the spiritual goods common to all the faithful?—4. Of what is this community of spiritual good the consequence?—5. What must be done to enjoy fully all these spiritual goods?—6. Do sinners derive any advantage from their union with the body of the Church?—7. Into how many branches is the Church divided?—8. How are the Saints, the souls in purgatory, and the faithful united?

CHAPTER XI.

ARTICLE 10.—“THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”

In the Catholic Church alone can the remission of sins be found. God grants this grace to those only who become his children. By Baptism we receive the remission of original sin; but as it too commonly happens that we lose our baptismal innocence, Jesus Christ instituted a sacrament which remits the sins committed after Baptism. This sacrament is called Penance. God is always disposed to pardon us, provided we receive the sacrament with the necessary dispositions; and there is no sin, however heinous, but may be effaced by this means. Though we may have committed the most grievous crimes, though their number may exceed the very hairs of our head, we can obtain their remission by the sacrament of Penance. It is not on account of our own merits that this pardon is granted us: it is through the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The promise of remitting our sins, which God has given, is a pure effect of his mercy; and this promise is the only resource of sinners—the sole motive of their confidence. It is God alone who can remit sins; so, when the Priests pronounce the sentence of absolution, it is God alone who, by

their ministry, pardons the sins from which they absolve. We cannot entertain the least doubt that Jesus Christ has granted this power to his Church. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," said he to his Apostles; "whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."* We would feel the full value of this favor, if we could comprehend the misery of a person who, after having offended God, could not again recover his grace, and who would be obliged to bear the weight of his iniquities, and see himself incessantly dragged by time, towards the fatal term of his reprobation.

We should take great care, however, not to abuse the mercy of God, nor take occasion from it to sin more freely. Ah! shall we continue to offend Him, because He is disposed to pardon us! shall we be wicked because He is good! Let us not deceive ourselves; this abuse of the mercy of God, is one of the crimes which irritate Him the most; and God, who always pardons those who approach Him with an humble and contrite heart, in the sacrament of reconciliation, is not bound to give the sinner time to have recourse to it. How many persons has death surprised in the state of sin! Can we say that we shall not be surprised like them?

A servant, having returned from catechism, was asked by his master what he had learned. He replied, in extreme grief, "I have learned that I shall be damned." "Damned!" exclaimed his master;—"why so?" "Because," he replied, "I should have a greater sorrow for my sins than for any other thing whatever. Now, I know that I felt more sorrow for the death of my father, than I do for my sins." The master told him that, in all probability, he mis understood the catechist; and then explained to him the doctrine of the Church on true contrition. "Do you not perceive," said he, "that sorrow for our sins is of a nature altogether different from that which is experienced on the death of a parent? The first is a hatred and detestation of the evil committed; the second, an effect of the natural tenderness towards their parents,

* John, xx, 22, 23.

which exists in the hearts of children. Do you detest your sins? Are you resolved rather to die than commit those sins again? If you really have these sentiments, you have the sorrow which is required: you have true contrition." At these words, the poor man recovered his peace; he thanked his master sincerely for having drawn him from an error which might have lead him into despair.—L'ABBÉ SALVATORI.

EXERCISES.—1. Which is the only Church that has the power to remit sin?—2. By what means are sins remitted?—3. Can all sins be remitted by Baptism and Penance?—4. When did our divine Lord leave to his Church the power of remitting sin?—5. What thought will enable us to comprehend the value of this favor?—6. With what sentiments should so great a benefit inspire us?

CHAPTER XII.

ARTICLE II.—“ THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY. ”

It is an article of faith that our bodies shall one day rise again. All men shall die, but they shall rise again with the same bodies which they had in this life. These bodies shall experience corruption, and shall be reduced to dust; but whatever changes they shall have undergone, they shall one day rise and be reanimated by their souls. Human life is but a dream, and death no more than a short sleep; but the resurrection will be the beginning of an everlasting life. There is no truth more clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, none more firmly supported by the constant belief of all ages, than this. Job, speaking of it, says: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth,and in my flesh shall see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom.”* In the New Testament this truth is still more clearly revealed. “The hour cometh,” says our Redeemer, “wherein all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrec-

* Job, xix, 25, 26, 27.

tion of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."* And St. Paul says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible."† This resurrection will be general: all, the great and the little, the just and the impious, those who are now upon the earth, those who shall come after us, all shall die,—as well as those who have gone before us from the beginning of the world,—and shall rise again with the same bodies which they had in this life. It is God himself, who, by his Almighty power, will perform this prodigy. As He has drawn all things from nothing by his will alone, in the same way, He will easily reassemble our scattered members, and unite them to our souls. It is not more difficult for the Almighty to give life to our inanimate bodies, than it was for Him to create them in the beginning. We have, every year, before our eyes, an image of this resurrection. Are not the plants, as it were, dead during the winter, and do they not appear to rise up again in spring? Do not the seeds which are sown in the earth rot, and, in a manner, die, in order to spring up afterwards with greater beauty? It is the same with our bodies: they are a kind of seed, which are put into the earth, and which will come forth again full of life. The bodies of the just will no longer be gross, heavy, and corruptible, as they are at present; they will be brilliant as the sun, exempt from every pain and inconvenience, full of strength and agility, as was the body of our Lord after his resurrection. The just, who are his children, sanctified by his grace, united and incorporated with him by faith, will rise like him. Jesus Christ will transform their corruptible bodies, and make them like unto his own glorious and impassible body.

As the body shares, here below, in the good or evil which the soul performs, so shall it, hereafter, be a participator in the soul's happiness or misery. Sinners shall rise, but their bodies will not be glorified; they shall rise, but only to be consigned, body and soul, to torments, in-

* John, v, 28, 29

† 1 Cor., xv, 25.

conceivable in their extent and eternal in their duration. "The whole multitude that sleep in the dust of the tomb, shall awaken; some to eternal life; others to endless misery and opprobrium."

What a spectacle will then be presented to our eyes! What sentiments will be excited in our hearts, when we shall hear the sound of the last trumpet; when this terrible voice shall be heard throughout the earth: "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment!" when we shall see all men reappear, and when there will be no other distinction between them, but that which their works shall have made! St. Jerome, in his desert, imagined continually, that he heard the sound of the last trumpet, and his soul was greatly terrified. We have much more reason to fear than he, and yet, how tranquilly we live! To the just, the future resurrection of the body is a subject of hope and consolation; to the wicked, of alarm and consternation.

In the reign of Antiochus, the seven Machabees, together with their mother, suffered courageously the most cruel torments, rather than violate the law of the Lord, because they had a lively hope in a future resurrection. The first had his tongue cut out, and the skin of his head drawn off; and when he was maimed in all parts, being still alive, he was brought to the fire, and fried in a frying-pan. The second being about to expire, said to the king: Thou, indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life, but the king of the world will raise us up in the resurrection of eternal life. The third said with confidence: These members I have received from Heaven, but for the law of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from Him. The fourth said: It is better, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by Him. The others showed equal courage and intrepidity. The youngest, however, still remained, and Antiochus endeavored to overcome his constancy by caresses and the promise of reward. Seeing that he could not prevail, he called his mother, and counselled her to use her influence with her son to save

his life; but this generous heroine, addressing her son, said: Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them; consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so shalt thou not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that I may receive thee again with them. Antiochus, enraged, vented all his fury on the youth: the admirable mother, herself, was the next victim of his cruelty.—2 MACHABEES, ch. vii.

EXERCISES. — 1. Will our bodies rise again? — 2. Repeat the passages of Scripture which clearly establish the dogma of the resurrection. — 3. How will the resurrection of the body take place? — 4. Does nature afford us an image of the resurrection? — 5. In what state will the just rise? — 6. The sinners? — 7. What effect should the thought of the resurrection produce in us?

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTICLE 12.—“LIFE EVERLASTING.”

Our souls being in their nature immortal, will, on their separation from our bodies, pass from this life to another; from this visible world to a world that is invisible. The pagans, themselves, believed in the existence of a future life, in which men would be rewarded or punished according to their deserts. The expectation of a future life is, then, the doctrine of the human race—the belief of nature. There is another life after this, and that life shall never end. We shall be eternally happy or eternally miserable, and our happiness or misery will depend on the state of our souls at the moment of our departure hence. As the soul may be stained with many venial faults which, for a time, exclude from Heaven, but deserve not the punishment of hell, there is a third place, called *purgatory*, where must remain, until purified, those souls which are sullied with venial transgressions, or which have not fully satisfied the Divine Justice for the debt of temporal punishment, ordinarily remaining due after mortal sin has been remitted in the sacrament of Penance.

St. Bernard left his paternal home, to lead with his brothers a life of solitude, and to devote himself exclusively to the service of God. Parting with his little brother Nivard, he said to him: "Farewell. Nivard! henceforth the estates are yours: we are going to enter into religion." "Ah!" said the pious and thoughtful child, "you take Heaven for your portion, and leave me the earth for mine; assuredly the division is unequal." Sensible of the value of the happiness they had purchased, he soon after resigned his estates, and followed his brothers to religion.

—BUTLER'S LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

EXERCISES. — 1. What becomes of the soul on its separation from the body? — 2. Has the dogma of a future life been known only to Christians? — 3. Is it reasonable that there should be a place of expiation after this life?

SECTION I.

Of Purgatory.

To enter Heaven immediately after death, the soul must either have preserved its baptismal innocence, or recovered lost grace by penance; for nothing defiled can enter Heaven. St. John, in concluding his description of the New Jerusalem (Heaven), says, "There shall not enter into it anything defiled."* Human weakness is so great, that it is very difficult for the soul to preserve itself so pure from the contagion of the world, as not to have to reproach itself at death with, at least, some venial faults; hence, the necessity of a place of expiation for these faults, as well as to supply the want of sufficient satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sins remitted in the sacrament of Penance. In the Old Law this truth was perfectly known: men instructed in religion were aware that souls were purified from venial sins by temporary punishment, before they could enter limbo, the place of repose in which the just awaited the coming of Jesus Christ, who was to conduct them to Heaven. The courageous Judas Machabeus sent money to Jerusalem, in order that prayers

* Apoc., xxi. 27.

and sacrifices might be offered for those who were killed in battle; knowing well, as he said, that "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."* This truth has been clearly established by the decision of the Church, founded on the words of Jesus Christ, who says, that the sins against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come.† Although the Church has decided nothing as to the grievousness of the pains endured in purgatory, yet, it is certain, that they are proportionate to the greatness of the sanctity and majesty of Him who was offended by the sins they punish; and that, consequently, they must be very great. Many of the holy Fathers assure us, that they differ from those of hell only in their duration, and in the patience with which they are borne.

We can relieve the souls in purgatory, and, in conformity with the spirit of the Church, we ought to do so. They are the predestined, the friends of Jesus Christ, who shall one day reign with him in Heaven, when they will, doubtless, indemnify us a hundred-fold for the sacrifices we may have made to comfort them, or to abridge their sufferings. They are our neighbors, parents, friends, or benefactors, who, from the depth of their prison, cry out to us in accents of supplication, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends!"‡ "My dear child," cries out, perhaps, a father or a mother, from the midst of the flames in which they are enveloped, "we suffer incomprehensible pains in this place of sorrow; have pity on us, to whom you owe such great obligations; to whom you owe your life and property; attend to our supplications, and relieve us in our sufferings. The hearing of Mass, an alms, a prayer, the enduring of some privation, the sacrifice of some pleasure, may, if offered for us, deliver us from the torments we endure, and procure our admission into everlasting glory. Ah! will you be insensible to our evils, or can you forget us in the day of our necessity? can you revel in delights, whilst we are plunged in devouring fire?"

* 2 Mac., xii, 46.

† Matt., xii 31, 42.

‡ Job, xix, 21.

A stranger, an enemy even, would excite our pity if we saw him in this state, nor could we, for a moment, withhold from him our charitable assistance. In purgatory, those who suffer are parents, brothers, sisters, friends, or souls whom their relations or friends have forgotten ; and shall we too abandon them ? They cannot satisfy the justice of God but by paying "the last farthing ;"* they are prisoners, detained for debt in this place of punishment, whom we can release by satisfying for them. This we can do by means of prayer, fasting, alms, indulgences, Communion, or by the most holy and adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, which may either be offered or heard for them.

Charity makes it a duty incumbent on us to relieve those holy souls ; " And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner."† *Interest* imposes the same obligation : those holy souls, that we shall have released, will plead for us in Heaven with ardor and efficacy, and will become our powerful protectors. *Justice*, even, requires that we aid the souls in purgatory, since many, either for having flattered our passions, or for having offended God on our account, may still be detained in this place of torments.

St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas, and other servants of God, having been arrested for the faith, were confined in a prison, in which St. Perpetua was favored with several visions. In the first, it was revealed to her, that she and her companions should all suffer martyrdom. In the second, she saw one of her brothers, who had been some time dead. It appeared to her as if this boy suffered horrible pains, and, above all, that he was tormented with a burning thirst : she imagined also, that there was near him, a vessel filled with water, but which, notwithstanding repeated efforts, he could not possibly reach, so as to procure any relief. Understanding by this vision that her brother was in purgatory, the saint, together with her companions, offered fervent prayers for him ; and, in some days after, they again saw him richly clad, and refreshing

* Matt., v. 2

† Luke, vi. 31

himself out of the vessel which stood in the plain. Thus our Lord was pleased to show the efficacy of prayers for the relief of the faithful departed.

EXERCISES. — 1. That the soul may enter into eternal life immediately after death, what is requisite? — 2. To what are the souls condemned, who leave this world stained with venial faults? — 3. What is purgatory? — 4. Cite some passages from the Holy Scriptures which clearly establish the doctrine of purgatory. — 5. In what are the pains of purgatory inferior to those of hell? — 6. What motives should excite us to relieve the souls in purgatory? — 7. By what means can we aid them? — 8. What advantages can we procure ourselves by praying for the souls of purgatory?

SECTION II.

Of Heaven.

Heaven is the kingdom of God's glory and magnificence; the dwelling-place which He has prepared for his angels, and for men who have lived in his fear and died in his love: but to give us an idea of the immense riches, the ineffable joys of Paradise, it would be necessary that one of its blessed inhabitants should descend from Heaven to declare its wonders. St. Paul tells us, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."* Imagine, if you can, the joy of a soul on its entrance into Heaven. Oh! what a delightful moment must that be, in which the miseries of this life terminate, and the happiness of eternity commences! what delight, what joy, what transport, to see God, and to be assured of the happiness of possessing Him for all eternity!

What joy for a captive when he recovers his liberty, and is emancipated from the slavery to which he had long been consigned! what joy for a captive, long immured within the walls of a dismal prison, when, in the end, he enjoys the light of day! what joy for the mariner, who has long been tossed on the stormy sea, in the midst of tempests and quicksands, in which he was in danger of perishing, to arrive safely at the destined port!—weak, imperfect image

* 1 Cor., ii, 9.

of the joy, the consolation, the happiness of a soul that, after the long captivity, the sorrowful exile, the protracted sufferings of this vale of tears, finds herself in the happy port of salvation—the region of the living, to dwell forever in the bosom of God, the Author of her being, the Term of her desires, the Centre of her repose, without fear of ever losing Him, and assured of ever participating in that happiness which He himself enjoys.

But it is not sufficient to know the happiness of Heaven ; we must endeavor to merit its possession by the practice of good works. “Narrow is the gate,”* says Jesus Christ ; let us then make every effort to enter by it. How great soever these efforts may be, they are nothing when compared with so great a good.

What ! we have not the courage to do a little violence to ourselves, to deprive ourselves of some gratifications, to overcome human respect, in order to merit so great a happiness ! Where is our faith ? where is our reason ? Men sacrifice, every day, their repose, their health, for the acquisition of a little honor ; they labor all their lives for a little wealth, which they know they must quit in dying ; and for Heaven, which they are always to possess, they will do nothing. “An eternity of labor would not be too much,” says St. Augustine, “to procure an eternity of happiness ; and yet we cannot afford it the labor of a single moment !” A few short prayers, morning and evening, alarm us ; confession terrifies us ; the sanctification of the Sunday we sacrifice to human respect ; the abstinences of the Church, to sensuality ; our duties, to the love of pleasure ;—and yet we pretend to be associated with martyrs, those men of virtue, those heroes of religion ! Heaven is a recompense, we must then labor to gain it ; it is a crown. we must fight to obtain it ; it is a conquest, we must do violence to ourselves to merit it ; those who know how to overcome themselves, are the heroes who bear it away. Heaven is the dwelling-place of sanctity ; its gates are open only to innocence or penance. If we

* Matt., vii, 14.

occupy ourselves with the vanities, the goods, and pleasures of this life, we are neither innocent nor penitent; we are, consequently, unworthy of admission into Heaven.

Ah! how consoling it is to the virtuous Christian to know that all he does for God will be abundantly recompensed; that a drop of cold water given in his name, a sigh which escapes the heart, will not be lost before this good Master. With what constancy does he not support the trials of this life! The losses and disgraces which so frequently lead the impious to despair, become for the just a subject of merit, by the resignation with which they receive them, and the hope of being recompensed in Heaven, which they regard as their permanent dwelling-place. Thither they send daily the treasure of their good works; it is for Heaven they labor, for Heaven they adorn their souls.

If we knew the happiness that awaits us in Heaven, and how much a soul can glorify the Lord, not only would we labor with ardor for our own salvation, but we would do all in our power to procure the salvation of others, particularly that of our relations and friends. This would be the true means of testifying our love to them. We can do nothing more advantageous to our neighbor, nor more glorious to God; for "he," says St. Chrysostom, "who macerates his body by austerity, merits less than he who gains a soul to God: it is a far greater thing to save our brethren, than to work miracles." What but zeal for salvation of souls has induced so many apostolic men to quit their country, their relations, their friends, and, at the risk of their lives, to cross the seas to convert infidels, or baptize children in danger of death? "He," says St. James, "who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."*

Mr. Boursoul discharged at Rennes, during forty years,

* James, v, 20.

the functions of the sacred ministry. He bore, without interruption or relaxation, the fatigues of the pulpit, and the painful labors of the confessional. He wished, he used to say, to die with arms in his hands, that is, in the discharge of his duty. "Ah! if I were worthy to obtain this favor of my God! I every day beg of Him that I may close my life either in announcing his Gospel from the chair of truth, or in exercising, in the sacred tribunal, the rights of justice and of mercy." A prayer dictated by such heroic motives of ardent charity, merited to be heard. On Easter Monday, 1774, Father Boursoul said Mass at five o'clock in the morning, and then went to his confessional. About two o'clock he went to the Church of All-Saints, where, notwithstanding his age and infirmities, he had preached during Lent, and at three he ascended the pulpit, to preach on the glory and happiness of the saints. In his manner, he had all the vigor and energy of youth; his voice possessed more than ordinary distinctness; and his gesture and the expression of his countenance were such as, beforehand, to indicate what he was going to utter. Towards the conclusion of the first part of his discourse, after a most lively and affecting description of the beauties of Paradise, and of the joys of the blessed, he made a new effort, and cried out: "No, my brethren, never will it be given to the weak eyes of man to sustain here below the splendor of the divine Majesty;" then lowering a little his voice, "It is in Heaven that we shall see Him face to face, and without a veil." These words were pronounced in a distinct tone, after which he said again in Latin, "*Videbimus eum sicuti est,*" and leaning forward on the front of the pulpit, he calmly expired. His eyes were fixed on Heaven, and he continued in this position. The church was filled with an extraordinary concourse of people, and the consternation became general: some screamed; others wept; others fainted; others cried aloud, "He is a saint! he died while speaking of the happiness of Heaven!" The voice of a child was distinctly heard pronouncing these words: "He was speaking of Paradise, and he has gone to take possession of it!"—CARRON.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is Heaven? — 2. Can man comprehend the happiness that God reserves for him in Heaven? — 3. What must we do to merit this happiness? — 4. With what sentiments should the thought of Heaven inspire us? — 5. What would be the result if we knew the happiness that awaits us in Heaven?

SECTION III.

Of Hell.

Hell is a place of torments, in which sinners shall be punished with the devils for all eternity. This, like all the other articles of our faith, has been revealed by God. Jesus Christ speaks in the Gospel of a “furnace of fire;”* of a place of punishment in which “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”† Those who doubt the certainty of a hell, and, under this pretext, follow their sinful inclinations, are either blind or corrupt; they risk an eternity of punishment for the pleasure of a moment.

There are two kinds of pain suffered in hell; the pain of loss, and the pain of sense. The pain of loss consists in the privation of the vision of God; the pain of sense consists in suffering the most excruciating torments, without the least comfort or relaxation. The Holy Scriptures describe these torments in the most energetic terms. A fire shall devour the reprobate: the worm that gnaws them shall never die, and the fire which devours them shall never be extinguished. This fire will torment the corporal senses, which have served as the instruments of sin, as well as the intellectual faculties, from which the guilt proceeded. It will devour, without destroying them. All the damned are deprived of the sight of God, and suffer in proportion to the number and grievousness of their offences. They shall suffer eternally, in body and soul, the most exquisite torments; and shall be agonized by despair, and destitute of the slightest consolation. That these pains are eternal, is an article of faith founded upon the Holy Scriptures. The Prophet Isaiah tells us, that “their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be

* Matt., xiii, 42.

† Matt., xxv, 30

quenched."* The wicked, we are assured, in St. Matthew, "shall go into everlasting punishment." †

But is not God too merciful to punish, with eternal misery, sins which have been committed in a moment? The mercy of God is, indeed, infinite; but his mercy is not contrary to his justice, and that justice requires that the impenitent sinner shall be punished eternally; nor is this wonderful. The sin of him who dies impenitent is, on account of his disposition, in some manner eternal, and, therefore, deserves eternal punishment. Mortal sin destroys, as far as it is capable, an infinite and eternal good, and ought, therefore, to be punished by sufferings infinite and eternal in their duration, as man, being finite, is incapable of suffering a punishment infinite in its nature. Human justice itself often punishes a single crime with a chastisement eternal in its own way, perpetual banishment, for example; so that if the criminal did not die, his exile from his country would be perpetual. Why, then, should not the Divine Justice banish for ever from the heavenly country the impenitent sinner, who excludes himself from its possession, by voluntarily dying in enmity with God?

Be not, then, deceived, but form, from this moment, a firm resolution of avoiding sin in future, since it would inevitably lead to your eternal ruin: do not expose yourself to this greatest misfortune; rather sacrifice all your worldly interests: "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" ‡

Some young persons of immoral lives, conversing with a religious of a most austere order, bantered him on his mortified manner of living, and concluded by saying, "Indeed, Father, you shall be very much taken in, if there be no Heaven." "And you, my children, much more, if there is a hell," replied the religious, "and the word of God assures us that there is."

The Gospel tells us of the rich glutton that, "lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar

* *Is.*, *lxvi.*, 24.

† *Matt.*, *xxv.*, 46.

‡ *Matt.*, *xvi.*, 26.

off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." *

EXERCISES.—1. What is hell?—2. How many kinds of pain are suffered in hell, and in what do they consist?—3. Shall the pains of the reprobate last for all eternity?—4. How should those persons be answered who say that God is too merciful to punish with eternal misery sins that have been committed in a moment?—5. What salutary effect should the thought of hell produce in us?

CHAPTER XIV.

The Profession of our Faith, and the Sign of the Cross.

To make profession of our faith is one of our most essential duties; for Jesus Christ will refuse to acknowledge as disciples, those who will have been ashamed to belong to him, or to make open profession of their belief in him. "He," says Christ, "that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in Heaven."† One of the means of showing that we are Christians, and that we consider ourselves honored in being such, is to make religiously the Sign of the Cross. There are two ways in which the Sign of the Cross is made: first, by signing with the thumb the forehead, lips, and breast, as is done by the priest before reading the Gospels at Mass, and which the faithful ought to do in like manner. We sign the forehead, to show that we are not ashamed of being Christians, nor of performing the works of a Christian; the mouth, to declare that we are ready to profess our belief in God and in his Son Jesus Christ; the breast, to express our love for the Cross of Jesus Christ, and that we believe firmly what we profess with our lips.

The second manner of making the Sign of the Cross is by putting the right hand to the forehead, then under the

* Luke, xvi, 23, 24, 25.

† Matt., x, 33.

breast, then to the left and the right shoulder ; saying : In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In making the Sign of the Cross, we profess our belief in the Unity of God by the word "*name*," (not *names*) ; and we profess our belief in the Trinity by naming the three divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We profess our belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of our redemption through him, by marking ourselves with the figure of that Cross on which he bled for the salvation of mankind ; and in the mystery of grace, by moving the hand from the left, the figure of sin, to the right, the figure of the grace which our Lord Jesus Christ has merited for us.

These words, *In the name of the Father, &c.*, signify, moreover, "I do this action to honor, please, and obey the Most Holy Trinity. I wish to render the three divine Persons all the homage in my power ; I do this action by the help of the Most Holy Trinity, acknowledging that I can do nothing but by the power which the Father communicates to me, by the grace which the Son has purchased for me, and by the light which the Holy Ghost imparts to me."

We should, then, be careful to make the Sign of the Cross morning and evening, before and after meals, at the beginning and end of our prayers, at the commencement of every principal action, but always with respect, and with attention to its meaning : this would be a sure means of drawing down upon ourselves and our undertakings, the blessing of the Almighty. We should also make it, at least on our hearts, in every danger of soul or body.

A young person was ashamed to make the Sign of the Cross in the presence of a stranger, before an action, at the commencement of which it was usual for him to make it. One who was witness of his cowardice and of his little love for Jesus Christ, thus addressed him : "Our Blessed Lord did not blush to die on a Cross to redeem you, and yet you blush to form upon yourself the august sign of

your redemption! I trust," he added, "that henceforth you will make it your glory to belong to your adorable Master: and may the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless you, through the merits of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ!"—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. Is it essential that we make open profession of our faith? — 2. How can we make this profession briefly? — 3. Why, during Holy Mass, do we make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast? — 4. In what mysteries do we profess our belief when we make the Sign of the Cross? 5. With what thoughts should the Sign of the Cross inspire us? — 6. When should we make the Sign of the Cross?



PART SECOND.

OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Commandments in general.

God had, from the very beginning, engraved his Law on the heart of man; but, as its impression was gradually effaced, He determined on publishing it in a solemn manner, in the presence of the Hebrews, whom He had chosen as his special people. For this purpose, fifty days after their departure from Egypt, He called Moses, whom He had chosen as the leader of his people, to the top of Mount Sinai, where He made known to him his design of contracting with them an eternal alliance. Moses having assembled the chiefs of the nation, announced to them the orders of the Lord, and desired them to communicate the same to the people. The people, on hearing the order of God, replied with one voice, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do."* Three days after, early in the morning, a dark cloud was seen overhanging the summit of the mountain, thunders were heard to roar, lightning flashed, and a sound, like that of many trumpets, was heard, which gradually became louder and louder. The people, terrified, took refuge in their tents, but Moses commanded them to advance to the boundary, which, by God's order, he had marked out for them at the foot of the mountain. In the midst of this terrible manifestation of Almighty power, the voice of God was distinctly heard pronouncing the Ten Commandments: "*I am the Lord thy God.*" &c.†

The Ten Commandments were afterwards written on two tables of stone, and thus the Lord, having made himself known, and having asserted his right to command us, published his Law and ordained its observance. This Law is given to us as well as to the Israelites; it is the Law of

* Exodus, xix, 8.

† Exodus, xx, 2.

nature; the Law of all nations; the duties which it enforces are the duties of all men, the fulfilment or neglect of which, will decide their eternal destiny. The first three precepts of the Decalogue prescribe to us our duties to God; and the other seven, our duties towards our neighbor; thus, the love of God and our neighbor is the abridgment of the Law.

A venerable man, seeing himself surrounded by a number of children, who pressed upon him, eager to receive instruction, spoke to them of the happiness of serving God, and of the great advantages they would derive from fidelity to his commandments. "My dear children," said he, "observe with what punctuality earthly monarchs oblige their subjects to obey their ordinances, and reflect that the Almighty, who is the King of kings, will not suffer any one to violate his commandments with impunity. During my long life I have ever remarked six things:—

1. That those who do not fear God are always unhappy;
2. That those who work on Sundays never become rich;
3. That goods dishonestly acquired, are quickly squandered;
4. That almsdeeds never impoverish;
5. That morning and evening prayers never retard one's business;
6. That a vicious and disobedient child is sure to be unhappy."—LITTLE SOUVENIR.

EXERCISES. — 1. Why did God determine on publishing his Law in a solemn manner? — 2. Where and how was the Law promulgated? — 3. Recite the Ten Commandments which were given to the Jews. — 4. Were the Commandments given to the Israelites only? — 5. What do the two parts, into which the Commandments are divided, prescribe?

CHAPTER II.

OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

"I AM THE LORD THY GOD; THOU SHALT NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME" *

The First Commandment obliges us to believe in God, to hope in Him, to love Him with our whole heart, and to adore but Him alone.

* Exodus, xx, 2, 3.

SECTION I.

Of Faith.

Faith is a supernatural and theological virtue, by which we firmly believe all the truths which the Church teaches, because God, who cannot deceive nor be deceived, has been pleased to reveal them. These truths are contained in the Holy Scriptures and Tradition. The Scriptures are the sacred books which have been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and are called the Old and the New Testament. By Tradition is meant that portion of the word of God which has not been written by those to whom God revealed it, but has descended to us through every succeeding age by the teaching of the Apostles and of their lawful successors. The Church, to whom the sacred deposit of Scripture and Tradition has been confided, determines their true interpretation, which she proposes to the faithful, with an infallible judgment and sovereign authority. God himself has given her this power, promising to preserve her from all error, and to assist her in her teaching, to the consummation of the world: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." * We must, then, believe, without doubt or hesitation, all that the Church teaches, for there is no salvation to be hoped for by him who does not believe her doctrines. "He that believeth and is baptized," says our Blessed Redeemer, "shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." †

Faith, then, is absolutely necessary for our justification and salvation. This virtue honors God, and renders Him homage as the Sovereign and Infallible Truth. It is, as St. Paul assures us, a sacrifice which we make to Him, by submitting our judgment to his infallible word, and silencing our objections and prejudices, to believe, without any shadow of doubt, on the authority of his divine word, things which our senses cannot perceive, nor our understanding comprehend. We should frequently make acts

* Matt., xxviii. 20.

† Mark, xvi, 16.

of Faith upon the truths of our holy religion, that we may thus testify to God our humble submission to the doctrine which He has revealed.

The submission which we owe to the word of God, and to the teaching of his Church, will appear perfectly reasonable when we consider, that we every-day believe, on the testimony of men, many things which we have never seen; and others, which, though perceptible to the senses, we cannot comprehend.

The word of that God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, merits infinitely more credit than the testimony of man, or than that of our own senses and judgment, which, being limited in their nature, are liable to err.

Nothing can be more reasonable than to believe, on the authority of God, things which we do not comprehend: we believe, then, because God has revealed, for Faith is founded, not on our own weak conceptions, but on God's infallible word. The mysteries of religion can be known only by revelation. God has revealed them, and has established on earth, an infallible authority to propose them to us. As He has called all men to the knowledge of the truth, He has furnished them with the means of knowing it, suited to the capacities of all. To be a Christian, nothing is wanted but docility; and this docility is not a blind and stupid credulity, but an enlightened submission, founded upon the strongest motives, and those most capable of determining a reasonable man. Public facts, stupendous miracles, are the incontestable roofs which establish the truth of religion.

"Jesus Christ," says St. Augustine, "requires Faith from men; but before requiring it, he proved himself entitled to it by miracles." This is the proof to which he himself referred the Jews when he said: "The works that do in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works."* Miracles are, then, the evidences of truth; and we cannot, without impiety, reject a doctrine which they

* Jol n, x, 25, 37, 38.

have confirmed. It would be the height of absurdity, nay, impiety, to suppose, that God would employ his almighty power to authorize a falsehood.

We must believe all that the Church, "the pillar and the ground of truth,"* teaches; to reject a single article, would be to deny her authority. We would sin against Faith if we wilfully doubted any one of the truths which she proposes to us, and we would expose ourselves to the danger of falling into this sin, were we to read heretical or infidel books; for,—“he that loveth danger, shall perish in it.”† We would also sin against Faith if, through fear of men, or any other motive, we renounced it externally, or by word of mouth, although, at the same time, believing it in our own heart. “With the heart,” says St. Paul, “we believe unto justice; but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”‡ The martyrs preferred the most unheard-of cruelties, and even death itself, rather than dissemble their belief before the tyrants by whom they were persecuted.

We would sin also against this virtue, by neglecting to be instructed in those truths of religion, the knowledge of which is necessary to salvation. By this criminal neglect, several Christians live in ignorance of what they are bound to know, and, thereby, commit numberless sins which they do not perceive.

We distinguish many kinds of Faith; namely, *human*, or *natural faith*, by which we believe on the authority of man; *divine*, or *supernatural faith*, by which we believe on the authority of God; *living*, or *practical faith*, which is accompanied with charity and good works; *dead*, or *theoretic faith*, which is deprived of them; *infused faith*, which we receive in Baptism; *acquired faith*, which is an increase of the divine light, obtained by the practice of virtue; *implicit faith*, by which we believe generally all the truths the Church teaches; and *explicit faith*, by which we must believe certain truths distinctly—such as the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and

* Tim., iii, 15.

† Eccus., iii, 27.

‡ Rom., x, 10.

Redemption, the last four things, and what regards the Commandments, Prayer, the Sacraments, &c.

In a company in which, by the providence of God, a Clergyman happened to be present, some young persons spoke with unbecoming levity of the truths of religion, and affected to disbelieve some of the articles which the Church teaches. "Gentlemen," said the good Father, you seem not to believe these things now, but I assure you, you shall one day believe them, if not in *time*, at least in *eternity*; but it is melancholy to reflect, that your belief will then be like that of the devils, for they believe, and yet are, and shall forever be, in torments."—MÉRAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. What does the First Commandment require of us? — 2. What is Faith? — 3. Where are these truths to be found? — 4. Is Faith necessary for salvation? — 5. How does St. Paul define this virtue? — 6. Is the submission reasonable which we owe to the word of God and the teaching of his Church? — 7. How do persons sin against Faith? — 8. What do you mean by *human faith*? *divine faith*? &c., &c.

SECTION II.

Of Hope.

Hope is a supernatural and theological virtue, by which we expect, with a firm confidence, from the goodness of God, the gifts which He has promised us.

How ineffably great and precious are these gifts! They are nothing less than "the good things of the Lord in the land of the living,"*—the eternal possession of God himself. We, of ourselves, are incapable of meriting such a happiness; but God, who loves us, notwithstanding our misery and unworthiness, has promised all the graces necessary to obtain it. He has given us his only Son, that whoever believes in Him, may not perish, but have life everlasting. The sight of our miseries ought not to prevent us from hoping in God, and expecting the possession of the happiness which He has promised; his almighty power, to which nothing is impossible, his infinite mercy,

* Psalm xxvi, 13.

the inexhaustible merits of Jesus Christ, the power of his grace, of his promises, the command which He has given us to hope in Him,—these are the foundations of the Christian's Hope. After such assurances, we would do Him an injury not to hope in Him. As God desires to be believed when He speaks, so He desires also to be trusted when He promises; our confidence ought, then, to be absolute and persevering. Christian Hope is not uncertain or wavering: it is a firm confidence, because it rests on an unshaken foundation. St. Paul compares it to a firm anchor, which retains the vessel in the midst of the tempest. This hope, when humble, sincere and persevering, can never be confounded; for God cannot fail in his promises. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one word of the Lord shall not fail. We are then assured that, if we have confidence in God, He will grant us all that He has promised. "My children," says the Almighty, "behold the generation of men; and know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded."*

Christian Hope is opposed by two vices, despair and presumption. We sin against Hope when we despair of salvation. Such was the sin of Cain, who, after the murder of his brother, said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon."† Despair is a most horrible crime in the sight of God, because it is an outrage against his goodness, which, of all his perfections, He loves most to manifest to men, and to which He is most desirous that they should render homage by confidence the most unbounded. "Can a woman," says the Lord, "forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands." And again: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be made white as wool."‡ There is no sin, however heinous, which our Lord has not expiated by his death, and the pardon of which he has not merited. From the height of his cross he announced to us, that all his blood is ours. This infinitely loving Father

* Eccles., ii, 11.

† Gen., iv, 13.

‡ Isaias, xlix, 15, 16, and i, 18.

asks but the return of his prodigal child ; our repentance will awaken his tenderness : however, we, on our part, should be careful not to abuse his patience and goodness by offending Him with greater liberty, and persevering in our evil courses because He is so ready to show us mercy.

A person sins against Hope when, presuming on the mercy of God or on his own strength, he defers his conversion. Such is the sin of those who form any erroneous idea of the mercy of God, and believe that they can be saved without ceasing to offend Him, or who, promising themselves a long life, flatter themselves that it will be time enough to think of their conversion when the period of youth is past. How many have been deceived by this false confidence ! They reckoned on a future time for repentance, but this time was not granted them. We should avoid this illusion, and should not defer a single instant to give ourselves to God. We do not know how long we shall live ; but we do know that every hour may be the last of our lives. " Say not : I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me ? for the Most High is a patient Rewarder. Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin ; and say not : The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins ; for mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day ; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee."* It is true that a sinner, the penitent thief, was converted in his last moments ; but this was a miracle effected at the death of Jesus Christ, and woe to him whose salvation depends upon a miracle ! " There was *one*," said an ancient Father, " that none might despair ; there was *but one*, that none might presume."

We also sin against Hope by not having due submission to the dispensations of Providence in our temporal concerns, by murmuring against God, and believing ourselves miserable when we meet with losses or afflictions, and by impatiently wishing for death. Ah ! since we have so good

* Ecclus.. v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

a Father, who never permits any cross or affliction to befall us but such as He knows and designs to be for our real good and advantage, how can we repine at the dispositions of his all-ruling providence, or fail to repose due confidence in Him? Does not our Blessed Savior assure us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and that without his permission not one of them shall perish?*

We should be well persuaded that riches, health, and other temporal advantages, may be very detrimental to our eternal salvation, and that it is good to suffer the privation of them when such is the will of God. We ought not only to disregard all losses, but even believe that we have lost nothing, so long as we are permitted to hope for the eternal possession of the kingdom of Heaven.

To animate and fortify our Hope, we ought to habituate ourselves to make frequent and fervent acts of this virtue, particularly when we are in temptation and affliction.

God permitted St. Francis of Sales to experience a most trying and dangerous temptation. While he was finishing his studies in Paris, being then only sixteen years of age, the enemy of man filled his imagination with the dismal thought that he was numbered among the reprobate. This temptation so afflicted his soul, that it deprived him of his rest; he would neither eat nor drink; his sight became dim, and his strength visibly declined. His preceptor perceiving the condition to which he was reduced, that he took no pleasure in anything, and that a pale and sickly hue was settling on his countenance, inquired the cause of his melancholy; but Francis, prompted by the wicked enemy, concealed the temptation under which he was laboring.

He no longer felt any pleasure in his spiritual exercises. Prayer, which had formerly been his delight, was now become a burden; even the remembrance of the delicious sweetness and calm which he had enjoyed in this delightful exercise, but increased the desolation with which his soul was visited. "Never," would he say to himself,

* See Matt., x, 30, and Luke, xxi, 18.

“never can I hope to see the beauty of God’s house, or drink of the torrent of its pleasures. Oh! lovely tabernacles of the house of my God! never, never, shall I behold you!”

He remained an entire month in this anguish and bitterness of heart, which he could compare to nothing but the pangs of death, and which, as he imagined, far exceeded anything on earth, that a human being was capable of enduring. His days were passed in the most bitter agony, and at night, he watered his bed with his tears. Having one day entered, by divine inspiration, the church of St. Stephen, to invoke the mercy of God, he knelt before an image of the Blessed Virgin, and begged of this “Comfortress of the afflicted,” to be his advocate with God, and to obtain for him the grace, “that if he were so miserable as to be destined to hate God in eternity, he might, at least, love Him with his whole heart, while he remained on earth.” A prayer, dictated by sentiments so remote from those of a reprobate, was immediately heard; the darkness which had overspread his mind was dissipated, and his soul was replenished with light and joy, with hope and consolation.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is Hope? — 2. What are these ineffable gifts? — 3. What is the foundation of our Hope? — 4. What are its characteristics? — 5. What vices are opposed to Hope? — 6. Why is despair a most horrible crime in the sight of God? — 7. How does a person sin by presumption? — 8. Do we sin against hope in not having due submission to the dispensations of Providence? — 9. Should we frequently make acts of this virtue?

SECTION III.

Of Charity.

Charity is a supernatural and theological virtue, by which we love God above all things, because He is infinitely good and perfect, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Hear what our divine Redeemer says of Charity, in his reply to a doctor of the law, who, tempting him, put the following interrogatory: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and First Commandment. And the second is like to this:—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and prophets.”* But was it necessary that God should command us to love Him? Is He not supremely beautiful? Do not his infinite perfections, his goodness towards us, the benefits which He has conferred upon us, the advantages which we gain by attaching ourselves to Him,—do they not all engage us to love Him? He has created us, He preserves us, He has made the heavens, the earth, and all creatures, for our use and benefit. But God has done still more for us in the order of salvation. He has given us his only Son; He has sacrificed him for our redemption; He has adopted us as his children; each day, each moment of our lives, He sustains us by his grace; He destines us, after this life, for eternal felicity in the kingdom of his glory; how, then, can we refuse Him our heart? Must it be proved to a child that he ought to love his father? Is not this sentiment natural to man? Is it not the spontaneous tendency of the heart? Does not a child experience this tenderness of feeling at the remembrance of his parent? And is not God our Father? Is there any one to whom this name is so suitable? Is there any one who deserves it better? Add to all this, the sweetness that is enjoyed in the exercise of this holy love. Oh! with what pure joy, what holy consolation, does it fill the heart which it has once inflamed! All the pleasures which the world can afford are nothing, when compared with that delicious peace which God bestows on the soul that loves Him. We should, then, attach ourselves to God; we should hasten to give Him our heart before sin renders it unworthy of being offered to Him. We cannot be happy but in loving Him, and the more we love Him, the more will our happiness increase.

Yes; God alone is our true happiness. The man who does not love Him is truly miserable, although he may live

* Matt., xxii, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

in the midst of glory, riches, and pleasures; he always desires something, and is never content. He, on the contrary, who loves God, finds in this holy love, consolations which supply the place of all things else. His desires are satisfied; his heart is tranquil; nothing can trouble the calm of his soul: in poverty he is rich; in humiliation he is great; in suffering he is filled with consolation. We should, therefore, love God with our whole heart; He is our first beginning, and our last end. God wishes to possess our whole heart: we must prefer Him to all creatures, and be disposed to lose all, rather than forfeit his holy grace. In fine, we should love nothing whatever, but with reference to Him.

A person would sin against this commandment by placing his sovereign good in anything but God; as, the ambitious, in honors; the avaricious, in riches; the voluptuary, in sensual pleasures.

The love of God ought to be active. "If any one love me," says our Lord, "he will keep my word."* We naturally seek to please those whom we love. If we love God, we shall do his holy will; we will accomplish faithfully all He ordains; we will make frequent acts of this virtue, to prove the sincerity of our affection; we will also manifest, by our good works, that it exists within us. The love of God is never idle; it is a fire which continually burns: if it cease to inflame the heart, we have a proof that it is extinguished.

But, besides loving God, we must also love our neighbor. The love of God and the love of our neighbor are inseparable; and our Lord Jesus Christ declares that the love of our neighbor is the distinctive mark of his disciples. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."† Whoever, therefore, does not love his neighbor, is not a disciple of Jesus Christ; he has renounced his Gospel and his promises: "For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?"‡ In the first ages of the Church, there reigned among the faithful the most

* John, xiv, 23.

† John, xiii, 35.

‡ 1 John, iv, 20.

intimate union and the most tender charity: they had but one heart and one soul. "See," said the pagans themselves, speaking of those faithful followers of Jesus Christ, "see how they love one another." St. Paul reduces all our duties towards our neighbor to this single precept; and, in reality, if we truly love our neighbor, we shall be very far from doing anything in his regard, which is forbidden by the other commandments; we shall neither speak injuriously to him nor of him, nor commit violence against him; we shall neither wrong nor deceive him; but we shall, on every occasion, render him all the assistance and service in our power.

Let us not imagine that by our *neighbor* we are to understand those only who are linked to us by affinity or friendship. "If," says our Savior, "you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this?"* By our neighbor, then, we are to understand, all men without exception, because they have all the same Creator, and the same origin; because they all compose but one family, of which God is the Father; because they have been created for the same end, everlasting felicity; and because they have all been redeemed at the same price, the blood of Jesus Christ, who died for all men. This love must extend even to our enemies: the precept of Jesus Christ is formal. "But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."† Say not that it is sufficient not to wish evil to those who hate you, but that, to love them, to be the first to propose a reconciliation with them, or to render them kindly offices, is impossible. No; this is not impossible with the help of God's grace, and God will give his grace to those who ask it. God commands us to love our enemies, and He never commands anything that is impossible; but He wishes us

* Matt., v, 46, 47.

† Matt., v, 44, 45.

to do all we can with the help of the grace which He has given us, and to implore his aid for any further assistance that may be wanting to us.

We prove our love for our neighbor by exercising towards him the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal. The spiritual works of mercy are; to lead back to the way of virtue those who have strayed from it, to instruct the ignorant, to give good counsel, to comfort the afflicted, to pardon injuries, to bear wrongs patiently, and to pray for the living and the dead. The corporal works are; to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to redeem captives, to visit the sick and prisoners, to shelter the harborless, and to bury the dead.

The Apostle St. Paul may be proposed as a perfect model of love for Jesus Christ, who, having destined him for a great work and much suffering, bestowed on him a great soul, gifted with an unshaken courage, and the most ardent Charity. "The Charity of Jesus Christ presseth us," he says in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. And again, "Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again."* Writing to the Galatians and Romans, he speaks as follows: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."† "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? But in all these things we overcome because of him that loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."‡

St. Paulinus bestowed all he possessed on the poor; and having no longer anything to give, he sold himself as a slave, in order to liberate the son of a poor widow who had asked him for an alms. St. Gregory the Great, who relates this fact in his Dialogues, says, that St. Paulinus continued

* 2 Cor., v, 14, 15.

† Gal., ii, 20

‡ Rom., viii, 35, 37, 38, 39.

to labor in the capacity of a slave, until his master, having discovered his extraordinary merit, generously granted him his liberty.—GODESCARD.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is Charity? — 2. What words of our Lord show the importance of Charity? — 3. What are the principal motives that should incite us to love God? — 4. How may it be shown that God alone constitutes the happiness of man? — 5. How should we love God? — 6. What is the most evident proof that we love God? — 7. On what words of Holy Writ is founded the obligation of loving our neighbor? — 8. What are our duties towards our neighbor? — 9. Who is our neighbor? — 10. Must we love our enemies? — 11. What are the spiritual and corporal works of mercy?

SECTION IV.

Of Adoration.

Adoration is the fourth duty required by the First Commandment. It consists in rendering to God the homage and worship which are due to Him as sovereign Lord and Master of all things. It is a profound humiliation, or, as it were, an annihilation of the soul before the supreme Majesty of God; before Him who, with a single word, created the heavens and the earth: in whose sight the nations melt as wax, and the mountains bend with reverence; that God who sends the lightning and tempests as ministers of his vengeance, and who chains them up again when He is pleased to exercise his mercy. At the sight of the greatness of God, the adoring soul is humbled, confounded, and, in a manner, annihilated, before his divine Majesty; she offers the humble acknowledgment of her dependence and servitude; she praises and glorifies his holy name, and renders grateful thanks for the favors she has received from Him; she humbly implores the succors which she needs, and which she expects from his goodness alone; she offers and consecrates herself to Him, without reserve, to accomplish in all things his holy will.

These interior sentiments are manifested by corresponding exterior actions; such as, genuflections, prostrations, prayers, thanksgivings, and, above all, by the Sacrifice of the Mass, which, of all the acts of adoration, is the most ex-

cellent and august. We ought, then, to render God every-day, and particularly in the morning and at night, the tribute of praise and adoration which He demands of us. By this exercise of religion we should begin and end the day, and be careful never to fail in so important and essential a duty. Our first thought, the first motion of our heart, ought to be directed to Him who has created us, who preserves us, and who daily loads us with new benefits. Our first action should be to prostrate ourselves before his sovereign Majesty, to adore Him, to thank Him for his benefits, to consecrate ourselves to his service, and to petition Him for the graces which are necessary for us. Before and after meals we should adore this tender Father, who opens his beneficent hand, and fills his children with benediction: and no false shame should ever prevent us from acquitting ourselves of this duty. Should a child blush to testify his gratitude to a parent every time he receives new pledges of his tenderness? At the close of the day, we should renew the homage we rendered to God in the morning, humble ourselves in his presence for the faults we have committed during the day, beg pardon for them, and thank Him for the graces with which He has favored us. We should remember, however, that the formulas of prayers, and other exterior practices of piety, are but the body of religion; the interior feeling of adoration is its soul. Without this disposition of the heart, our words and exterior actions would not be agreeable to God; they would draw down upon us the reproach which He formerly made to the Jews: "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." *

Adoration can be paid only to God. We honor and venerate the saints, as God's special friends and faithful servants; but we never adorn them, nor give them that supreme worship which is due to God alone. It is good and useful to invoke them, that we may obtain of God, through their intercession, the graces of which we stand in need; but it is only of God we ask them, in the name of Jesus Christ, their Saviour and ours, who alone has merited

* Matthew, xv, 8.

them for us by his sufferings and death. "Blessed," says St. Paul, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* We also honor their relics, because they are the precious remains of a body which was the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which shall, at the last day, rise glorious and immortal, and be forever honored in Heaven; and in this we but follow the usage of all ages. We honor, likewise, their pictures and images, but this honor is referred to the object which they represent; nor do we acknowledge in these images and pictures any other virtue, than that of serving to recall the remembrance of those whom they represent. In placing ourselves on our knees before an image of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, or of the saints, it is not the image, it is Jesus Christ himself we adore; it is not the image we honor, but him or her, the remembrance of whose virtue it recalls.

The use of images and pictures is productive of great advantages. They remind us of the virtues of the saints, their combats and victories, and the glory which they now enjoy in Heaven.

The sins opposite to the adoration due to God, are *idolatry*, *superstition*, and *irreverence*. Idolatry consists in giving to creatures the worship due to God alone. This was the crime of the pagans, who rendered divine honors to inanimate creatures, and even to the works of their own hands. Such gross idolatry exists no longer amongst us, but irreligion and impiety have taken its place. There are foolish men who make divinities, as it were, of their vices, and whose pride, love of riches and pleasures, impurity, gluttony, &c., become the objects of their idolatry. How abominable in the sight of God is that sacrilegious worship which is given to those passions which, in a depraved heart, usurp the place of the divinity!

Superstition is committed when we use, in the divine worship, practices which the Church does not sanction, or place confidence in certain words or actions which it disapproves, and from which we expect to obtain particular

* Ephesians, i, 3.

effects, such as the knowledge of things hidden or to come; also, when we observe omens, and what are called lucky and unlucky days. All these, and such like superstitions, are calculated to draw down on those who commit them, the malediction of the Almighty.

The sin of irreverence is committed by profaning churches, relics, or holy things, and still more by a sacrilegious reception of the sacraments. It is a sacrilege to steal any sacred thing, to steal in a church, to strike a person consecrated to God, &c.

Constantius Chlorus, a wise and humane prince, esteemed and protected the Christian religion. For some time, however, having concealed his real dispositions, he publicly declared that all Christians who held offices in his court, should offer sacrifice to Jupiter, and to the other pagan divinities, if they desired to retain their situations and his favor. Some, preferring temporal advantages to their eternal interests, immediately complied with the condition, little imagining that the prince merely intended to make trial of their virtue and fidelity. No sooner had they sacrificed, than he, indignant at their base apostacy, banished them contemptuously from his presence. One of his courtiers, greatly astonished, begged an explanation, to whom the emperor wisely replied: "Men who sacrifice religion to worldly interests, are capable of infidelity to every obligation. Could I expect that those men whose disgrace has excited your surprise, would have proved faithful to me, after having acted so unfaithfully to their God?" Not content with punishing and humbling these apostates, he felt it a duty to reward those who had generously adhered to their religion, regardless of consequences; he kept them continually about his person, and reposed in them the most unlimited confidence.

The Emperor Constantine Copronymus raised a violent persecution against Catholics on account of the honor they paid to holy images. A pious and learned solitary, named Stephen, being brought before him, charged with this pretended crime, the emperor asked him if he still persisted in his idolatry, for such he designated the honor which

Catholics give to images. "Where is the man so ignorant," replied the saint, "as to worship stones, gold, or silver, because they are made to represent Jesus Christ or his saints? Surely, it is well known that the honor we pay these representations is purely relative." Then, producing a piece of money, he turned to those near him, and asked, would they not deem him worthy of punishment who should cast this coin on the ground, and trample under foot the image of their emperor. "Doubtless," they answered, "the insult ought to be punished." "Oh, then," rejoined the holy man, "how blind you must be! You would punish him with death, who should trample on the image of an earthly prince, a mortal man, and yet you would dare to trample on the image of the King of kings!"

EXERCISES. —1. Have we other duties to fulfil towards God than those prescribed by the theological virtues?—2. In what does adoration consist? — 3. With what sentiments should the greatness of God inspire us?—4. How are these interior sentiments manifested exteriorly? —5. When ought we to render God our tribute of praise and adoration? —6. Do we adore the saints? — 7. Whom do we honor when we kneel before the images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints? — 8. What is the utility of images? — 9. What sins are opposed to the adoration due to God? — 10. In what does idolatry consist?—11. When are we guilty of superstition?—12. How do we sin by irreverence?

SECTION V.

Of the Respect due to the House of God.

The Church is the house of God; He fills it with his presence and his glory. This is the place in which He particularly resides, and which is specially consecrated to his worship. Here the faithful assemble to pray, to sing his praises, and to celebrate the holy mysteries. Here, too, our Lord Jesus Christ dwells corporally, and offers himself a Victim for us to his heavenly Father. Need anything further be said to impress us with the most profound respect and the most religious veneration? Ought we not to enter this holy place with a respectful fear, saying with the Patriarch Jacob, "How terrible is this place! This is no

other than the house of God, and the gate of Heaven!"* Yes; the temple of God is a new Heaven, in which He dwells with men. He who resides in this august tabernacle, is the same God that the blessed adore in Heaven. We ought, like them, to be annihilated, as it were, in mind and heart, before the divine Majesty, who, though veiled in our temples, is not the less entitled to our adorations. How, then, dare we enter them without respect? How dare we remain in them with so little recollection or modesty, and sometimes even with the most scandalous dissipation?

Everything in this holy place reminds us of the benefits of God:—that sacred font at which we received, together with the life of grace, the inestimable right to a heavenly inheritance; those tribunals of reconciliation in which we have been so frequently purified from our sins and healed of our spiritual maladies; that cross on which our Redeemer died to save us; that altar on which he daily immolates himself, to apply to our soul the fruits of his sufferings and death. Here, too, we have participated of the table of the Lord in the holy Communion, and received the junction of the Holy Ghost in Confirmation. Ought not objects so touching fill our mind with holy thoughts, and our heart with pious sentiments? and should they not render our visits to this holy place more frequent? How is it that we frequently go thither with repugnance, remain there with disgust, and occupy ourselves while we stay with vain, not to say criminal, thoughts? Do not so many monuments of God's goodness speak feelingly to our heart? What an outrage to respond to so much love, with so reprehensible an indifference!

Such is the respect which the Turks have for their mosques, that they never pass by them without paying them some mark of reverence. A man on horseback who should pass without alighting, would subject himself to severe chastisement. They enter them barefooted, and with the hands joined in profound recollection; so attentive are they while they stay, that they seem more like pious

* Genesis, xxviii, 17.

Christians than infidels. They several times, bow down their heads to the ground, in token of their humiliation in the presence of the Deity. During the whole time they continue in prayer, they are never observed to look about them. To speak in the mosque is a crime; and it is a thing unheard-of to see two Turks exchange a word at time of prayer. Should one of them be spoken to at this time, he would not utter the least answer; and should he be struck, or otherwise ill-treated, he would not even look around to see who had done him the injury. What confusion shall not these infidels one day cause to those irregular Christians, who pray for with so little attention and reverence! Even the most regular amongst us may learn a salutary lesson from their example.—DES VOYAGES.

EXERCISES.—1. What motives should impress us with a profound respect for the House of God?—2. With what sentiments should we be animated on entering this holy place?—3. With what should the sacred font, the tribunal of reconciliation, the cross, the altar, &c., inspire us?

CHAPTER III.

Of the Second Commandment.

“THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.”

The Second Commandment enjoins the duty of speaking with reverence of God and all holy things, and of keeping our lawful oaths and vows. It forbids all swearing injurious to God or his saints. It is as if the Lord would say: “Reverence my name; do not profane it, by using it to authorize lies or injustice, or, without a sufficient cause, even truth itself.” To swear is to invoke God or his saints to witness the truth of what we assert, or to witness the promise which we make.

Swearing is an act of religion or a sin, according as the circumstances and dispositions which accompany it are good or evil. To be an act of religion, an oath must have three conditions, viz., truth, justice, and judgment, according to these words of the Prophet Jeremias. “Thou shalt

swear : As the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice."* If the oath wants *truth*, it is a *false* oath, a perjury ; if it wants *justice*, it is an *unjust* oath ; if it wants *judgment*, that is, if it is taken with levity, or without sufficient necessity, it is a *rash* oath. A rash oath, though it may have truth and justice, is a sin ; and it may become considerable by accompanying circumstances, or on account of the scandal it may occasion. Besides, such as have the custom of swearing rashly, are daily exposed to the danger of perjury : " Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls."† An oath should be taken for a just cause only, and never through passion.

Unjust and false oaths are grievous sins, and become more or less heinous, in proportion to the malice of the swearer, and to the scandal which they occasion.

A *promissory* oath is that which a person takes in order to render more certain the execution of what he promises. He who takes such an oath without having the intention to do what he promises, sins grievously, and becomes guilty of perjury. As to the performance of what is thus promised, there are two cases in which the oath does not oblige : first, when the thing is bad or forbidden ; for God will never require the execution of what is sinful ; secondly, when the thing which was possible when the oath was taken, has become impossible. When an oath is extorted through violence, to perform a lawful thing,—for example, if, through fear of injuries threatened by a robber, you promise on oath to send him what he demands,—you are bound to fulfil your promise ; because, although the robber extorted the promise unjustly, there is nothing unlawful in its fulfilment. However, you may go to the Bishop for a relaxation of the oath, and then you will be no longer bound by the promise which had been extorted by threats.

There are three kinds of words that have reference to swearing—*blasphemy*, *imprecations*, and *disguised oaths*. Blasphemy is a word or discourse injurious to God, to his saints, or to religion. It would be blasphemy against God

* Jeremias, iv, 2.

xxiii, 9.

to attribute to Him defects, or to charge Him with partiality, severity, injustice, &c.; to deny any of his perfections, such as the *care* He takes of his creatures; to speak with contempt of his divine attributes, or to add to his adorable name terms which would dishonor it. It would be blasphemy against the saints to mock them, attribute defects to them, or censure the respect with which the Church honors them. It would be blasphemy against religion, to turn it into derision, to blame its practices, or to speak evil of the Scriptures. There are also blasphemies of the mind and heart; such as thoughts and desires contrary to the divine perfections, or to things which concern religion. Of this kind is the blasphemy of the impious, who say in their heart, "There is no God."* This is a horrible sin, and one which merits the most dreadful punishments. Blasphemers are not now, as in former times, stoned, nor are their tongues cut out; but let them not triumph; the time of punishment will soon arrive, and then they shall receive the chastisement due to their crimes.

Imprecations are words by which, in promising, denying, or affirming, something, we wish evil to others or to ourselves, such as death, damnation, &c. Disguised oaths are of two kinds: first, the oaths themselves, with some change in the terms in which they are expressed; secondly, words which do not precisely express an oath, and yet have reference, in some manner, thereto. Christians ought not to express themselves thus, nor permit themselves habitually to use such words.

By swearing we affirm or promise something to men by interposing the name of God; there are also promises to God himself, of things that are agreeable to Him. A promise of this kind is called a vow.

A vow is a deliberate and voluntary promise made to God, of doing something that is good or more agreeable to God, or abstaining from something that is bad or less pleasing to God, and made for his honor and glory. He who, in this manner, promises to make a pilgrimage, to

* Psalm lii, 1

give certain alms, to avoid a certain sin or the occasion of it, &c., makes a vow.

A vow is more than a simple resolution. By a vow a person obliges himself to God to do the thing promised, under pain of sin. The obligation of executing such promises extends to the circumstances promised, the place, time, &c. The Church can dispense with the obligation of performing what one has promised by vow; but she does not, and cannot do so without serious reasons.

A boy who had been trained up with much care by virtuous masters, gave, on one occasion, a very touching proof of his faith. Having returned somewhat later than usual from school, his father, exceedingly angry, reprehended him sharply, and swore by the most holy name of God. The poor child, afflicted at being the occasion of this profanation, and of his father's anger, flung himself at his feet, and cried out, "O father, beat me, but do not swear!" The father, seeing the horror which his impiety had excited in the child, was sensibly affected, and so much did he profit by the lesson it had taught him, that he never afterwards blasphemed or swore profanely. If Christian children were but good and pious, what a number of sins might they not prevent their parents from committing!—ESSAI SUR LE BLASPHEME.

EXERCISES.—1. What does the Second Commandment enjoin and forbid?—2. What is swearing?—3. How many conditions must an oath have to make it an act of religion?—4. What is a *false* oath?—5. An *unjust* oath?—6. A *rash* oath?—7. A *promissory* oath?—8. In what cases does the oath not oblige, as to the performance of what is thus promised?—9. Are we obliged to keep an oath extorted through violence?—10. What is blasphemy, and name some cases, in which we may be guilty thereof?—11. What do you mean by blasphemies of the mind and heart?—12. What are imprecations?—13. How many kinds of disguised oaths are there?—14. What is a vow?—15. What is the difference between a resolution and a vow?—16. To what does a person oblige himself by a vow?—17. To whom is reserved the power of dispensing with the obligation of a vow?

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Third Commandment.

“REMEMBER THAT THOU KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH DAY.”

Every day belongs to the Lord ; there is not one which should not be referred to his glory ; but, as the necessities of this life prevent us from occupying ourselves continually in religious exercises, God has reserved to himself one day in each week, which He ordains to be employed in his worship and service. This precept is as ancient as the world. God, after having created the universe, consecrated this day, in order that men should celebrate the memory of the creation, and of that mysterious rest into which He entered, after having finished this great work. The day whereon God rested was, in the Old Law, the seventh, and was called the Sabbath, or day of rest ; but in the New Law, it is the first day of the week, and is called Sunday, or the Lord's day. Sunday has been substituted for Saturday, from the time of the Apostles, and by divine inspiration, in memory of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ; because on that day, after the labors of his mortal life, he entered into his eternal repose. It is destined to honor the Lord, the conqueror of death, by whom we have been all redeemed.

“Six days shalt thou labor, and shalt do all thy works ; but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God : thou shalt do no work on it, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gate.”* The Jews observed the Sabbath so religiously that they prepared on the eve, the food that was necessary for the Sabbath day. The law of the Gospel is less rigorous ; it permits the works which charity or necessity may demand ; as, also, those which are called *liberal* ; namely, reading, writing, drawing, &c. ; but it does not permit servile works, that is, such labors as people usually occupy themselves with to gain a livelihood : nor those which would

* Exodus, xx, 9, 10.

interfere with the service of God. It would, then, be a great evil to occupy this holy day in servile works, unless they were absolutely required by the divine service, the public necessity, or the indispensable wants of life.

It is sinful, also, to share in criminal amusements; for this would be to profane, not to sanctify, the Sunday. Of all works, what can be more contrary to the sanctification of this day, than those of sin, which render us slaves of the devil? Does not sin, which is always a great evil, appear to possess a new degree of enormity, when committed on this day? Does not such conduct betray a great forgetfulness of God, and a great contempt of his holy law?

It is not sufficient to abstain from servile and criminal works; we must also employ the Sunday in the service of God, and in works of piety and religion; this is the essential end of the precept. If God commands us to interrupt our ordinary labors, it is, that nothing may interfere with our application to his service. Would God be honored by a repose of idleness? Would we sanctify this day by passing it in gambling or in feasting? No, undoubtedly. The works which sanctify the Sunday are; assisting at the divine offices, public instructions, pious reading, and, in general, all good works, which have for their object the worship of God, our own sanctification, and the advantage of our neighbor. It is true, that God does not forbid us innocent and moderate recreation. This is necessary for us, and we may safely take it, but never to the prejudice of piety; nor should the time of recreation be taken from that which is destined for prayer, for praising of God, or our own instruction. Would it be sanctifying this day to give but a small portion of it to God? The Church, indeed, prescribes the hearing of Mass as the principal work of piety, by which this day is to be sanctified; but the public prayers and instructions, appointed for different hours in the day, show us clearly that her wish is, that we assist at them.

In the Old Law, the profaners of the Sabbath were punished with death. God not only ordered that the man who was found gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath day, should be stoned; but He expressly said to Moses: "Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them: See that thou keep my Sabbath; because it is a sign between Me and you in your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord, who sanctify you. Keep you my Sabbath, for it is holy unto you: he that shall profane it, shall be put to death: he that shall do any work on it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of his people. Six days shall you do work; on the seventh day is the Sabbath, the rest holy to the Lord. Every one that shall do any work on this day, shall die."*

A missionary Priest, who resided in one of the Mariar Islands, was, on a Sunday, passing along the sea-shore, on his way to visit a sick person. He saw some Indians, whom he knew to be Christians, employed mending their barks. He asked them if they had not all the other days of the week to do such work; and what could induce them to transgress the divine precept which ordains, that the Lord's day should be kept holy, by abstaining from all servile work, and employing it in works of Christian piety. They replied in a surly and disrespectful manner, that they did so because it was their wish. The Missionary pursued his journey, and, having visited the sick person, he repassed the same way, and found the barks, and the house in which the Indians had been at work, burnt to ashes. The poor people, who had been so indifferent to his charitable remonstrance, instructed by the calamity which had befallen them, were covered with confusion, and gave evident marks of their sincere regret for the sin and folly of which they had been guilty.—LETRES EDIFIANTES.

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- EXERCISES. — 1. What day of the week has God reserved to himself? — 2. Why has He consecrated this day? — 3. Is this precept very ancient? — 4. Why was the Sabbath of the Old Law superseded by the Sunday of the New? — 5. Tell us how religiously the Jews observed the Sabbath. — 6. How should we observe Sunday? — 7. What works does the law

* Exodus, xxxi, 13, 14, 15.

of the Gospel permit and prohibit on the Lord's day? — 8. Does the sanctification of Sunday consist in abstaining from servile and criminal works?

CHAPTER V.

Of the Fourth Commandment.

‘ HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.’”

God, by the Fourth Commandment, prescribes the duties of inferiors towards their superiors, and of superiors towards their inferiors; for, by the name *father* and *mother*, must be understood, all those who have any authority or right to command us. Children have four principal duties to fulfil towards their parents: they ought to respect, love, obey, and assist them in all their necessities.

The first duty of children to their parents is respect, an inviolable respect, at all times, and on all occasions. This respect consists in receiving, with docility, their advice and correction, in speaking to them, always, with submission, in giving them no cause of displeasure, and in concealing or excusing their faults and imperfections. “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee.”* “Honor thy father and thy mother, which,” says St. Paul, “is the first commandment with a promise.”† A father and mother are, in regard to their children, the representatives of God; they hold his place; they are the depositaries of his authority. To fail in respect towards them, is to fail in respect towards God himself: the injury done to them is offered to Him whom they represent. Hence, in the Old Law, if a child so far failed in respect for his parents as to curse them, he was punished with the utmost severity. “He that curseth his father or mother, dying let him die: he hath cursed his father and mother, let his blood be upon him.”‡ Besides the general promise of a long and happy life annexed to the Fourth Commandment, the Scripture contains many other promises of

* Exod., xx, 12.

† Ephes, vi, 2.

‡ Lev., xx, 9.

particular blessings annexed to this duty. "He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall have joy in *his own* children; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard."*

The second duty of children is to love their parents. Is it necessary to prove this obligation? Does it not suffice to remind any child, with ordinary feelings, of his many obligations to his parents? They have given him life; since his birth they have taken care of him; during his infancy, when he stood in need of unceasing attention, they were almost solely occupied with him; and how disagreeable soever the attentions were which he then required, they afforded them with joy. What pains do not a father and mother take, and what labors do they not undergo, to procure for their child what his wants require! He who, after such services, does not love his parents, can hardly be regarded as a Christian, or even as a human being—he is a monster in human form!

The third duty of children towards their parents is obedience. "Children," says St. Paul, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just."† A child that obeys his parents cheerfully, proves that he loves and respects them sincerely; but he who disobeys them, or obeys them with reluctance, shows that he has for them neither the love nor the respect to which they are entitled.

The fourth duty of children towards their parents is to assist them in their necessities, such as sickness, old age, or poverty. On all these occasions, a child is bound to assist his parents as much as is in his power. Whoever possesses the ordinary feelings of humanity, will be sensible of this obligation; and surely, there can be no greater happiness than to give back to a father and mother a part, at least, of that which we have received from them. To fail in this duty would be monstrous ingratitude, and would prove that the very sentiments of nature were stifled within us. The Scripture expresses itself in very strong terms against those who are guilty of this crime. "Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father; and

* Eccls., iii, 5, 6.

† Ephes., vi, 1.

he is cursed of God that angereth his mother,"* by refusing to take care of her. "He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy."† "Support," says Ecclesiasticus, "the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life; and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength: for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten. For good shall be repaid to thee for the sin of thy mother. And in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered; and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather."‡

If a child ought to assist his parents in their temporal wants, with much more reason ought he to procure for them those spiritual succors of which they have need, particularly in their old age and last sickness. Several parents have been indebted for their eternal salvation to the attention of their children, in procuring for them the last sacraments before their death. Children ought also, after the decease of their parents, to execute faithfully their last will, pray fervently for them, and cause prayers and Masses to be offered for their eternal repose.

Fathers and mothers owe four things to their children; namely, maintenance, instruction, correction, and good example. They ought to maintain and clothe their children, and train them up in a manner befitting their condition. They should have them taught some useful trade, or procure for them a profession or an employment, by which, in after-life, they may obtain a suitable livelihood.

It is also their duty to teach them, or have them taught, the principal mysteries of religion, the Commandments of God, and the Precepts of the Church, and the prayers they ought daily to recite. When their children are about to engage in a state of life, parents ought to consult God by prayer, and should examine well whether the state which their children are about to embrace, is that to which they are called. They should also instruct them on the nature of its obligations.

* Ecclus., iii, 18. † Prov., xix, 26. ‡ Ecclus., iii, 14, 15, 16, 17.

Parents are obliged to correct their children, that is, to reprehend them when they have committed a fault; but they should be careful to do so with meekness and charity, not with anger and passion.

They should also watch over their own conduct, and give good example to their children. They should be careful neither to do nor to say, in the presence of their children, anything that is reprehensible, or that cannot lawfully be imitated. Oh! how many are damned for having given bad example to their children, or for having neglected to train them up in a Christian manner!

To this commandment is also referred what St. Paul addressed to the Romans: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. For princes are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. . . . For he is God's minister to thee, for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear; for he beareth not the sword in vain. . . . Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Render, therefore, to all men their dues;—tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."* There is, therefore, an absolute obligation to obey the laws in everything that is not contrary to the divine precepts: thus the Apostles and primitive Christians acted, although they lived under cruel and idolatrous princes, who inhumanly put to death a countless multitude of martyrs. The Prince of the Apostles ordains, that we be submissive not only to sovereigns, but also to magistrates, who are their representatives.†

This commandment requires also, that the faithful be submissive to their ecclesiastical superiors. The Pope is the vicar of Jesus Christ; the diocesan Bishop is the successor of the Apostles; a parish Priest is the spiritual father of his parishioners; a confessor is their visible angel, to conduct to Heaven, those who confide in him; every

* Rom., xiii, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7.

† 1 Pet., ii, 13, 14.

Catholic Priest is the minister of Jesus Christ, for the administration of the sacraments and remission of sins. We should testify to them, on every occasion, the love, respect, and obedience, which they merit, on account of the sacred character with which they are invested, and the functions which they are appointed to exercise on the part of God. To all the ministers of his Church, Jesus Christ says: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."*

Masters who are charged with the education of children, hold the first rank after parents. Their function is to teach their pupils the knowledge of religion and human science, to watch over their conduct, and to form their hearts to virtue. They are bound to entertain for their pupils the affection of a father, and to fulfil his duties towards them.

Pupils ought, on their part, to entertain for their masters, respect, love, docility, and submission. A master consecrates his time, studies, and health, to educate his scholars in secular and religious knowledge; for them he sacrifices his liberty, reduces himself to a species of servitude, and supports with patience the weariness and disgust of incessantly repeating the same things. What a title to their gratitude does he not acquire by so many sacrifices, and by procuring for them so many inestimable advantages! The advices which he gives are necessary to teach them how to avoid the dangers to which their passions expose them: they are salutary curbs which arrest them, and prevent them from falling into the dire abyss which yawns beneath their feet. Nor will the reprimands which he is obliged sometimes to give, weaken their affection for him, if they are not unreasonable. When he reprimands them, it is through zeal for their improvement, which, had he loved them less, would not have given him so much concern. He never uses severity but with regret, and his own feelings are wounded by the reproofs which he is obliged to give.

* Luke, x, 16.

We often see persons who, in their youth, had opportunities of being well educated, but to whom these opportunities proved fruitless. They have grown up incapable of discharging the duties of their situations, and by reason of their ignorance, they daily fall into numberless mistakes. Should you wish to know whence this disorder proceeds, ask those who have always known them. They will tell you: "These persons were idlers, who never submitted to restraint or authority; they rejected advice, and spurned reprehension; they disregarded their masters, exposed their least defect, took a malicious pleasure in speaking to their disadvantage, and in prepossessing others against them: therefore are they ignorant of what it most concerns them to know; they are full of defects, are useless—despicable. In a word, because in their youth they were indocile and disobedient, they are, in manhood, ignorant and irreligious." Young persons are not sufficiently sensible of their obligations to their instructors, nor of the importance of the services which they render them, but they shall one day know the value of a good education, and understand how much they are indebted to those who have been the instruments of so great a blessing. The advantages of a good education cannot be sufficiently appreciated; we shall enjoy them during the whole period of our life. Our gratitude for them should, therefore, have no other limits.

A French gentleman was arrested at Lyons for some supposed crime, and was thence sent to Paris. His daughter never quitted him. She asked permission to accompany him in the vehicle wherein he was to travel, but this was refused her. Although naturally of a delicate frame, she travelled all the way on foot, a distance of more than a hundred leagues, keeping up all along with the prison-van, of which she lost sight only when she went to prepare food for him in the towns through which they passed, and when she went to beg the loan of a blanket, that he might rest with more ease in the prison, to which, for the night, he was consigned. She ceased not for a moment to follow

him and to provide for his wants until their arrival in Paris, where she was prohibited to wait on him. Accustomed to soften the severity of his gaolers, this affectionate daughter was not disheartened, nor did she despair of overcoming even the malignity of his persecutors; and after three months of reiterated prayers and solicitations, she had the happiness of obtaining his release, and of again embracing the author of her existence, to whose interests she had so heroically devoted herself.—CARRON.

EXERCISES.—1. What does God prescribe by the Fourth Commandment?—2. Who are comprised under the name *father* and *mother*?—3. What are the four principal duties of children towards their parents?—4. In what does the respect due to parents consist?—5. Besides the general promise of a long and happy life, what other promises of particular blessings to respectful children, does Scripture contain?—6. What are the motives that *oblige* children to love their parents?—7. How may we qualify a child who does not love his parents after such services?—8. What is the third duty of children towards their parents, and what do they prove by cheerfully obeying them?—9. How do children fulfil the fourth duty towards their parents?—10. Should a child assist his parents in their temporal wants only?—11. What four things do parents owe their children?—12. Is it obligatory to obey the laws of our country?—13. On what passages of Scripture is this founded?—14. Whom must we obey in the Church?—15. On what is this submission founded?—16. What are the duties of masters towards their pupils?—17. What ought pupils to entertain for their masters?—18. What are the fatal consequences of neglecting to profit by the education we receive?—19. What gratitude should pupils cherish towards their masters?

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Fifth Commandment.

“ THOU SHALT NOT KILL.”

God, by the Fifth Commandment, forbids to take away, by private authority, the life of a fellow-creature. He also forbids us by it to take away our own. This crime is an outrage against the sovereign power of God; for He is the absolute Master of the life of man: to Him alone it belongs to take it away, as it is He alone can give it. It is the highest act of injustice that can be committed against man, as it robs him of that which he holds most dear. A

person is guilty of murder, not only when he himself commits the act, but also when, by command or counsel, he causes it to be committed, or when he assists in its perpetration.

The law of God does not confine itself to merely forbidding murder; it also forbids anger, contempt of our neighbor, injuries, and violence. Jesus Christ himself has given this extent to the precept, commanding us to stifle in our heart every motion of anger and desire of revenge, and interdicting all their effects, such as, injurious words and evil treatment, because they are all in themselves a kind of murder, and may lead to its commission, if not quickly repressed: therefore, St. John declares, that "who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer."* What other idea can we form of those who propose or accept a challenge to a duel, than that they are grievously criminal in the sight of God! What insane wickedness to imbrue one's hands in a brother's blood for a slight insult, a trifling raillery, a mere word; and to sacrifice to a false point of honor one's own eternal salvation and that of his neighbor! The Greeks and Romans, although pagans, were strangers to this barbarous custom. They were passionate for glory; but they well knew in what true glory consists: they made it consist in shedding their blood for the good of their country; and they drew their swords against the enemies of the state, not against their fellow-citizens. Duelling is, then, a crime, as contrary to humanity as to Christianity, as opposed to reason as to religion.

It is no less a crime to take away one's own life. Life is a deposit which God has confided to us, and which He commands us to preserve until He again requires it. To dispose of it without his order, or contrary to his prohibition, would be to usurp the rights of God, who is the sole arbiter of life and death. This crime is so much the more horrible, as it is irremediable; there is no opportunity left for repentance; its perpetrator precipitates himself irrecoverably into everlasting perdition. What folly to think

* 1 John, iii, 15.

of escaping a passing vexation, by casting one's self into the frightful and fathomless abyss of hell!

God does not confine himself to the prohibition of taking away the life of the body; He also forbids whatever can injure the soul, particularly *scandal*, which takes away the spiritual life of our neighbor. Scandal consists in doing anything which will lead others to sin, or turn them away from the path of virtue. It is a second species of murder; one which does not strike the senses, but which is no less real in the eyes of faith, and no less criminal before God. Jesus Christ threatens with the severest punishment, those who are to their brethren a subject of scandal, and an occasion of transgression. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh. . . . He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." * We may judge of the enormity of this sin by the horror of it with which our Blessed Lord is desirous of inspiring us.

If we consider the effects of scandal, we shall acknowledge the justice of the awful punishment which God reserves for those who are guilty of it. What does the sinner, who scandalizes his neighbor? He opposes the designs of God for the salvation of men. "It is not the will of your Father, who is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish," † says Jesus Christ. He has adopted them all as his children; He wishes to save all; but by scandal a person puts an obstacle to the will of God, since he causes those to perish whom God was desirous of rendering happy. The person who gives scandal, interferes with the redemption of man. Jesus Christ came upon earth to save souls; he shed the last drop of his precious blood for their redemption; he who scandalizes them, robs him of these souls, that have cost him so dearly; he deprives him of the fruit of his conquest; he renders the shedding of his blood useless to them; he exposes to infinite misery those for whom Jesus Christ merited eternal happiness.

* Matt., xviii, 7, 6.

† Matt., xviii, 14.

A young man possesses virtuous inclinations, is docile to his parents and masters, recollected in prayer, attentive to all his duties, the object of God's complacency ; but he has the misfortune to associate with a libertine, who glories in his impiety, who ridicules virtue, and those who follow its guidance. The young man, imposed upon by his discourses, yields to the fear of censure and derision, and blushes at virtue. The libertine goes farther ; he introduces immoral language, gives evil counsel, and encourages the commission of vice by his scandalous example. The young man learns the evil of which he was ignorant, receives bad impressions and, in the end, plunges into the same criminal disorders. Behold him now become the slave of the same passions, the victim of the same vices. God wished to save this soul ; Jesus Christ died for it ; the sinner who scandalized it, is the cause of its perdition. What chastisements must await him ! Can there be any punishment too rigorous for him ? Miserable sinner ! you would have a horror to imbrue your hands in the blood of your brother, and yet the evil which you have done is infinitely greater. You would have been less cruel in his regard, had you plunged a dagger into his bosom, and deprived him of the life of his body. This soul that you have seduced will eternally cry to Heaven for vengeance against you, and its cries will be heard by the Sovereign Judge. Woe, then, to him who teaches youthful minds the evil of which they are ignorant ; who seduces innocence by his example or conversations ; who turns away others from virtue and piety by his foolish railleries ; or who distributes books pernicious to religion and morality. Woe, in fine, to him who is the cause of scandal, in any way whatever, or who, being able, does not prevent it. He is guilty of all the sin of which he is the cause, and he shall be punished for all the evil which may arise even after his death, by means of the scandal he has given.

Adonibesc having been vanquished by the Israelites, they cut off the extremities of his hands and feet. Then this barbarous king remembered all the cruelties which he

himself had perpetrated, and said: Seventy kings, whose fingers and toes I have caused to be cut off, gather up the leavings of the meat under my table: as I have done, so hath God requited me.*

A young student, who possessed in a high degree all the qualities which could be wished for in a young man, by a misfortune but too common among persons of his age, associated with bad companions, was soon drawn from the path of virtue, in which he had been trained up, and plunged into the very lowest depths of vice. His depravity soon became public; nor had the remonstrance of his afflicted family the least influence to induce him to change his life, and return to the path which he had forsaken. God himself, at length, visited him by one of those awful strokes of divine vengeance, which, as a thunderbolt, fall at last upon the sinner who has long slighted his goodness and his mercy. The young man awoke one night out of his sleep, screaming so loudly and dreadfully, as to terrify all who were in the house. His friends ran to his assistance; they did what they could to tranquillize and console him; they sent for a priest, who exhorted him to return to God, and to confide in his infinite mercies;—but all in vain: the unfortunate youth was in the very depth of despair. He cast his dying looks wildly around him, and exclaimed, in a terrific voice, these awful words: “Woe to them who seduced me! It is vain for me to invoke the mercy of God: I see hell open to receive me!” Then, turning on his side, he expired. Alas! what multitudes have fallen victims to the soul-destroying vice of scandal!—COLLET.

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- EXERCISES. — 1. What is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment? — 2. Does the law of God forbid murder only? — 3. Is duelling a great crime? — 4. Show that duelling is as contrary to humanity as to Christianity — 5. Make us understand the culpability of one who takes away his own life — 6. Does God confine himself to the prohibition of taking away the life of the body? — 7. In what does scandal consist? — 8. Illustrate by an example the criminality of him who gives scandal. 9. What are the fatal effects of scandal?
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* Judges, i, 7.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Sixth Commandment.

“ THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.”

By the Sixth Commandment, God forbids all those things which are contrary to purity of body and soul. Those things the Holy Scripture regards as abominable; and St. Paul does not hesitate to class with idolaters those who commit them, and he declares that neither shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*

It is forbidden, by this commandment, to say or do anything contrary to public decency, or against purity. Hence, it is highly criminal to utter obscene words, to sing lascivious songs, or even listen to such with pleasure; to read books, to write letters, or give advice tending to inflame the passions; to fix the eyes on immodest pictures or statues, or commit any act to please or gratify one's disorderly or irregular inclinations. There is no sin more opposed to the infinite sanctity of God, or which He punishes more severely, than that of impurity. Even in this life, He frequently visits those who commit it with his vengeance, of which many examples are recorded in Holy Writ. In an infidel, it would be sinful and punishable, because contrary to the light of natural reason; but, in a Christian, who has been regenerated in Jesus Christ, it would be much more heinous, because nothing is more at variance with the holiness of his profession, and because it outrages the Holy Ghost, whose temple it profanes, and our Lord Jesus Christ, whose members it sullies. What a crime to profane the temple of God! What a sacrilege to dishonor the members of Jesus Christ! This idea ought to fill us with horror: but we shall confirm ourselves in this sentiment if we consider the fatal consequences of this sin. It ruins health, dissipates property, and covers with infamy those who commit it. A young man addicted to this sin, becomes the disgrace of his family, the scandal of

* 1 Cor., vi. 9, 10.

his neighborhood ; and either perishes, miserably, in the flower of his age, or drags out a languishing life, in ignominy, sorrow, and despair. It also darkens the understanding, and renders it incapable of any serious application. His heart is even more diseased than his mind, and he conceives an almost insurmountable disgust for prayer and exercises of piety ; in fine, he is the carnal man of whom St. Paul speaks, who understands nothing of the things of God. The sight, even, of the good, gives him pain, because it is, as it were, a silent censure of his disorders. "For every one that doth evil," says Jesus Christ, "hateth the light."*

Another dreadful effect of this sin is, that it produces a great hardness of heart. The dearest interests have no longer any influence ; God's promises and threats are alike despised ; eternal happiness or misery makes no impression : all are reckoned as nothing. It leads even to the loss of faith ; for religion cannot be allied to a dissolute life. To stifle remorse and to live tranquilly in crime, the unchaste begin to doubt the most certain truths, and these doubts soon lead to settled unbelief. At last, comes final impenitence ; they die in their sins ; they stand before the tribunal of God covered with the crimes which sullied their whole life ; and they are damned ! Their bones, says the Scripture, shall be filled with the vices of their youth : they shall sleep with them in the dust of the tomb, and accompany them even to hell.

We are bound to avoid not only this sin, but also, the occasions that lead to it ; for "he that loveth danger, shall perish in it."† "It is a greater miracle," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "not to fall in the occasion of sin, than to raise a dead man to life." The following are some of the most dangerous occasions :—

1st. *Excess in eating and drinking.* "Take heed to yourselves," says Jesus Christ, "lest, perhaps, your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life : and that day come upon you suddenly. For, as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face

* John, iii, 20.

† Eccclus., iii, 27.

of the whole earth."* Drunkenness is, of its own nature, a mortal sin. As to the evil of it, in general, the Scripture says, "Wine drunken with excess raiseth quarrels, and wrath, and many ruins. Wine drunken with excess is bitterness of the soul."† "Who hath woe? whose father hath woe? who hath contentions? who falls into pits?—who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?—Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups."‡ Drunkenness excludes from Heaven; for, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, shall possess the kingdom of God."§ It leads and exposes one to the greatest crimes and to the most shameful falls. It changes men into brutes; robs them of their reason; destroys their health; brings on them many diseases; shortens their life; consumes their substance; reduces themselves and their children to penury and want; destroys the peace of their families; fomented their passions and lusts; makes them slaves to their sensual inclinations; renders them totally unfit for all spiritual duties; opens the door to all temptations; shuts up all access to the grace of God; and, when once it has become a habit, it is seldom, if ever, cured; and, finally, it drags the poor soul down to hell-fire.

2nd. *Idleness*;—because to live in idleness, is to expose one's self to continual temptation. Idleness is the fruitful parent of many vices.

3rd. *Bad company*. Nothing can be more pernicious than the company of such as, having lost all fear of God and sense of modesty, try to induce others to commit sin either by their discourse or bad example. The Holy Ghost, in several parts of Holy Writ, admonishes us to shun the company of the wicked, and to break off all intercourse with them, since they communicate the infection of their vices to all who associate with them.

4th. *Bad books*. The reading of bad books occasions a thousand dangerous thoughts, and fills the imagination

* Luke, xxi, 34. † Ecclus., xxxi, 38, 39. ‡ Prov., xxiii, 29, 30

§ 1 Cor., vi, 9, 10.

with impure images. Through the mind the poison passes to the heart, and there begets ruin and death. One bad book is capable of corrupting a multitude of young people; and, if it be one of those pestiferous productions, in which passionate intrigues, lascivious anecdotes, and obscene descriptions, are joined with impious maxims, calculated to banish the fear of God from the soul and undermine its faith, the evil is still more fatal and deplorable. Faith is the best safeguard of morals. So long as it exists in the soul, there is room to hope that virtue may return; but what is there to arrest the onward career of the sinner, when once he has lost the faith? O you, who have hitherto escaped the contagion, beware of reading pernicious books; reject them with horror when they are offered to you. Should such a book come into your hands, do not even look into it, lest you be tempted to read it. Say not that you desire to read it only on account of the instruction it contains, or the elegance of its style, since these advantages may be derived from better sources, without danger to morality. Works, combining all the graces and ornaments of style, with sound and varied information, are by no means rare. Moreover, all worldly advantages would be much too dear, if purchased at the price of your innocence and virtue. If you give the preference to books which may corrupt you, passion, and not reason or religion, dictates the choice. —See Ch. XI. Christian Politeness.

5th. *Plays*. It is in theatres that the demon of impurity displays his pomps with greatest advantage. There, everything breathes an air of voluptuousness, everything is calculated to ensnare: nothing, in fine, can be more opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of purity, modesty, prayer, and penance.

All, therefore, who would preserve themselves in the fear and love of God, must carefully avoid all these occasions, be earnest in the holy and necessary exercise of prayer, confess frequently to a pious and enlightened confessor, have a particular devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, and let no day pass without praying, fervently, for the great gift of holy purity.

All mankind, without distinction of age or sex, buried in the waters of the deluge, except Noah and his family, because, as the Scripture says, "all flesh had corrupted its way;"* five infamous cities consumed, with all their inhabitants, by fire from Heaven; four and twenty thousand Israelites, for the crime of impurity, put to death in a single day, and God, by his approval and his recompenses, declaring himself the Author of this terrible execution; are evident proofs of the horror which the Lord has for this vice, and that, even in this life, He frequently visits it with the most rigorous chastisements.

Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, if you see a dangerous book in the hands of your children or domestics, have at least the zeal of Diderot; this is not too much to expect. Snatch, as he did, with indignation, from the hands of those you love, every book in which religion and piety are not respected. It was his own work that the infidel could not bear to see, for an instant, in the hands of his daughter. How well may we say to him: "If your doctrines are so dangerous, as you now appear to allow, why diffuse them over the world? Why would you circulate, among the great family of mankind, those poisons, which you judge so dangerous for your own?"—MERAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. What does God forbid by the Sixth Commandment? — 2. Why is the sin condemned by this commandment so great a crime, especially in a Christian? — 3. What are the fatal consequences of this sin? — 4. What other ravages does this sin make in the heart of the person who has become its slave? — 5. Are we bound to avoid the occasions of this sin? — 6. What are the ordinary occasions of impurity? — 7. Name the fatal effects of *excess in eating and drinking*. — 8. Why is *idleness* an occasion of this sin? — 9. Is *bad company* very pernicious? — 10. Explain to us the great danger of reading *bad books*. — 11. What is the best safeguard of morals? — 12. Are *plays*, such as theatres, &c., very dangerous occasions of this sin? — 13. What means should they take who desire to preserve themselves in the fear and love of God?

* Genesis. vi, 12.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Seventh Commandment.

“THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.”

We are forbidden, by the Seventh Commandment, to take or keep unjustly what belongs to another: God being the Sovereign Master of all things, distributes the goods of this earth to his creatures, as best pleases Him; and He strictly requires that we respect the order his providence has established, and that we take not from others, what He has given them. This law is written in our heart; if we read it, we shall find, that we should not do to others, what we would not wish others to do unto us. Were a person to take what belongs to us, we would accuse him of injustice, and it would be such in reality; but another has the same right to complain of us, if we do not observe the laws of justice towards him. Without justice, society could not subsist. It is, therefore, forbidden us to wrong our neighbor in his goods, in any way whatever.

“Thieves,” St. Paul affirms, “shall not possess the kingdom of God.”* It is an injustice to take the goods of others by surprise or violence. It is also an injustice to take them by fraud, that is, to deceive one’s neighbor as to the weight, quality, or quantity, of the commodity we sell him.

Children are forbidden to take the goods of their parents, without their consent. To do so is a theft, against which the Holy Ghost speaks, in the strongest terms, in the Holy Scripture. He declares that he who steals anything from his father or from his mother, and says, that it is no sin, is the partner of a murderer. † What else can this mean, than that the young libertine who robs his parents to gratify his passions, wishes for the inheritance and the enjoyment of their goods before their death, which does not come soon enough for his wishes; thus giving evidence of a heart destitute of every sentiment of filial affection.

* 1 Cor., vi, 10.

† Prov., xxviii, 24.

It is unjust to contract debts which we have not sufficient probability of being able to pay, or to retain the goods of others, by not discharging what we owe, or by not paying, in due time, the wages of servants and workmen. "If any man hath done any work for thee," said old Tobias to his son, "immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all."*

It is also unjust to take usury, to retain what has been entrusted to our custody, or to appropriate to ourselves, without the owner's consent, anything we may have found. It is likewise unjust to cause any damage to our neighbor in his property, by injuring or destroying what belongs to him; and the injustice is the same, whether we do the injury ourselves, or cause others to do it.

When we have taken anything from a neighbor, or have done him injury, it is not sufficient to repent of it, and beg pardon of God; we must also restore what we have taken, and repair the injury we have caused. Without this reparation, there is no pardon to be hoped for, no salvation to be expected; for, we cannot enter into Heaven possessed of the goods of others. When not able to make restitution, there should be, at least, a sincere will to acquit ourselves of this obligation as soon as possible, and we should use every effort to place ourselves in a condition to do so.

This commandment also obliges, to give alms according to our means and the necessities of the poor. The Wise Man admonishes us, that we ought to assist the poor, and not abandon them in their poverty. St. John says, that "he that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him?" † and our Lord Jesus Christ will condemn to eternal fire, those who refuse to relieve him in the persons of the poor.

Although by alms-giving is understood, the distributing of a share of our temporal goods to the poor, there is another species of almsdeeds more meritorious, which consists in relieving the neighbor in his spiritual necessities. All men are not in a condition to relieve the bodily wants

* Tobias, iv, 15.

† 1 John, iii, 17.

of the poor, but all can render spiritual assistance, and contribute to his salvation by good example, by instruction, or by procuring him instruction. This duty devolves especially on parents and such as are charged with the instruction of others, or who, by their station, are obliged to labor for their neighbor's sanctification. To save the life of a famishing creature is, doubtless, a great charity; but to contribute to the everlasting salvation of a soul, is a work whose value shall be known only in the next life, and which can never be sufficiently appreciated in this. "He," says St. James, "who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."* "They that are learned," says the Prophet Daniel, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity." †

A poor Chinese Christian found, in one of the streets of Peking, a purse containing twenty pieces of gold. He looked around, hoping to find a claimant; and, thinking it might have fallen from a gentleman on horseback, who had just passed, he ran after him, and asked if he had lost anything. The gentleman searched his pockets, and missing his purse, replied in a tremulous voice, "Yes; I have lost my purse, containing twenty pieces of gold." "Be not disturbed," said the poor man; "here it is, with the twenty pieces." The gentleman, recovering from his alarm, could not but admire so noble an action, in a man of humble condition. "But who are you?" said he; "what is your name?—where do you live?" "It matters little," said the poor man, "for you to know who I am; it is sufficient to tell you, that I am a Christian,—one of those who make profession of observing the law of the Gospel, which forbids, not only to steal the goods of others, but even to keep what may be found by chance, when the owner can be discovered." The gentleman was so struck with the purity of Christian morality, that he went immediately to the church of the Christians, in order to receive

* James, v, 20.

† Dan., xii, 3.

instruction in the mysteries of our religion.—LETTRES EDIFIANTES.

A well-known usurer being at the hour of death, sent for a confessor, who told him that, his goods having been unjustly acquired, he was absolutely bound to restitution. "But what shall become of my children?" said the dying man. "The salvation of your soul ought to be much dearer to you," said the confessor, "than the fortune of your family." "I cannot persuade myself to do what you require; I cannot do it," replied the unfortunate man;—and in a few moments after, he expired! How awful a death! How much it should cause those to tremble, who have acquired the goods which they possess, by fraud and injustice!—CATHECHISME DE L'EMPIRE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is forbidden by the Seventh Commandment? — 2. On what is the respect we owe our neighbor's property founded? — 3. Are children forbidden to take the goods of their parents without their consent? — 4. Is it just to retain the wages of servants and workmen? — 5. Name some other actions which are unjust. — 6. What is required of a person who has taken or injured his neighbor's goods? — 7. What does this commandment also oblige us? — 8. How may almsgiving be supplied? — 9. What shall be the reward of those who contribute to the salvation of others?

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Eighth Commandment.

“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR.”

The Eighth Commandment forbids all false testimonies, rash judgments, and lies, it also forbids all words or reports hurtful to our neighbor's honor or reputation.

God is truth itself: whatever, therefore, violates truth, offends Him. Hence the prohibition, never to speak contrary to truth, so frequently repeated in the Holy Scriptures. The vice of lying is subversive of social intercourse, and is opposed to God's beneficent design in conferring the gift of speech. For we are endowed with this faculty,

that we may, by its means, communicate truth to our neighbor ; but, by lies, we are guilty of deception, and thus lead him into error. Even pagans felt the force of this principle, and many of them were remarkable for their abhorrence of lying and deceit. A lie, when uttered even in jest, or to promote our own or our neighbor's advantage, is unlawful and inexcusable ; but, the sin is far greater, when it prejudices the neighbor in his character—for example, by attributing to him some vice to which he is not addicted, or by laying to his charge some fault which he has not committed.

This species of lie is called *calumny*—a crime which shocks every upright mind by its detestable meanness and malice. The Scripture, speaking of calumniators, says: "Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have dealt deceitfully. The venom of asps is under their lips." "They have whetted their tongues like a sword ; they have bent their bow . . . to shoot in secret the undefiled." †

"A good name," says the Wise Man, "is better than great riches ; and good favor is above silver and gold : " ‡ but it is of his reputation and honor that the calumniator robs his neighbor ; and it exceedingly aggravates the calumny and completes its enormity, when it is affirmed on oath and in a court of justice. The false witness, besides the atrocious injury which he does to the innocent party, is guilty of a horrible impiety against God, whose awful name he profanes, by making it serve as the support of perjury and injustice. Those who have injured their neighbor by lying reports, must repair the injustice they have done him, and all the consequences of that injustice. They must re-establish his good name ; and this cannot be done but by an avowal of his innocence as public as the calumny had been. To restore the reputation which they have unjustly tarnished, they must sacrifice their own. Rightly, then, does the Scripture say, that the tongue of the slanderer is a two-edged sword.

* Rom., iii, 13.

† Ps. lxiii, 4.

‡ Prov., xxii, 1.

This commandment also forbids *detraction* ; that is, making known, without necessity, the evil which our neighbor has committed. So long as the fault is secret, or known only to a few, he has not forfeited his good name ; and, if we publish his fault, we unjustly deprive him of his reputation. Would we wish that our own hidden sins should be divulged ? No, certainly. We ought, then, to be silent regarding those of others. "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor ? let it die within thee, trusting that it will not burst thee."* "My son, have nothing to do with detractors ; for their destruction shall rise suddenly."† Detraction, like fire borne onwards by the wind, passes from mouth to mouth, and, what it does not destroy, it blackens. It is a restless evil, which fomented dissensions in families, and fills them with confusion. It is an empoisoned source of hatred and revenge, and the occasion of numberless sins. "The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed ; for he hath troubled many that were at peace." ‡

The detractor is guilty of all the sins which he has occasioned ; he has sinned in those who have mentioned the detraction after him ; he has sinned even in those who heard him ; for it is forbidden, not only to speak ill of our neighbor, but even to listen to the evil spoken of him. If none would listen, there would be none to detract. The pleasure with which detractors are listened to, encourages and hardens them, and, therefore, the listeners become participators in their guilt.

Of all kinds of detraction, the worst, in its consequences, is that of telling one person in secret, what another has said or done against him . Reports of this kind almost invariably beget, in the heart of him who hears them, hatred, and a desire of revenge, which, most generally, terminate in irreconcilable enmity. The accused, not knowing what has been related of him, has no means of justifying or explaining himself, or of making satisfaction. "Six things there are, which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul

* Ecclus., xix, 10. † Prov., xxiv, 21, 22. ‡ Ecclus., xxviii, 15.

detesteth,—him that soweth discord among brethren.”*

It is, however, allowable to discover the faults of our neighbor when they are contagious, that they may not be productive of injury to others. But, even then, we should discover them to those only who can apply a remedy to the evil, or for the purpose of guarding others against its influence. Far from wounding charity by so doing, we, on the contrary, discharge a duty the most natural and the most necessary; and it is, in reality, loving our neighbor, to prevent him from destroying himself, or causing the destruction of others. It is charity to prefer his salvation, and that of others, to any reputation he may have acquired.

Although detraction is less criminal than calumny, yet its consequences are sometimes more fatal, as the injury it does our neighbor is almost irreparable. When a person has calumniated another, he can and ought to retract the calumny, and thus heal the wound he has inflicted, and restore his neighbor's reputation; but when the evil reported of his neighbor is true, it cannot be retracted without a lie, the telling of which can never be permitted. And though a person should repent of the sin of detraction, it is almost impossible for him to repair the injury it has done. The injury must, however, be repaired as far as possible, by telling of the injured party, whatever can be said truly to his advantage, in order thus to efface, or, at least, weaken, the bad impression which the detraction may have made.

By the Eighth Commandment, we are forbidden, not only to speak ill of our neighbor, but also to entertain a bad opinion of him, without just cause. We are not permitted to judge our neighbor upon weak evidence, or equivocal appearances, since we would thereby expose ourselves to condemn the innocent. The judging evil of our neighbor, without sufficient grounds, is the sin of *rash judgment*. As long as he is not convicted, he has a right to our esteem, of which we cannot deprive him without injustice, except for just reasons. Rash judgment is no less contrary to charity than it is to justice. Charity inclines us to think

* Prov., vi, 16, 19.

advantageously of our brethren, to interpret their actions favorably, and to excuse whatever is not manifestly bad. "Charity," says the Apostle, "thinketh no evil:"*—it sees no crime until it is evident, nor believes it until it is proved. When a person loves another, he is more disposed to believe him innocent than guilty of any crime with which he may be charged. Would we wish, that without sufficient reason, we were judged guilty of some criminal action? No, undoubtedly. Let us not, then, do to others, what we would not wish to have done to ourselves. It would be a judgment still more rash and criminal, to attribute bad intentions to actions in themselves good and laudable, and to suppose vicious motives in those whose exterior conduct is regular and edifying. Nothing, however, is more ordinary, than to see malignity spread its poison over actions the most virtuous. This evil disposition, which sees vice under the appearance of virtue, can come but from a sinful and corrupt heart. Good people judge of others by themselves; as they are upright and sincere, they easily believe that others are so too; they are edified by those whose comportment bespeaks their hidden virtue; nor does it ever enter their mind, that their religious exterior conceals a heart enslaved to hypocrisy and pride. Occupied with their own defects, of which they are to render an account, they pay no attention to those of others; and, by this charitable conduct towards their neighbor, they provide for themselves a favorable judgment at the tribunal of God; for Jesus Christ has promised, that he will judge us in the same manner we shall have judged others.

St. Augustine, in order to prevent detraction, which is most common at time of meals, caused the following lines to be written over his table:—

" This board allows no vile detractor place,
Whose tongue shall charge the absent with disgrace."

Some of his friends having, one day, begun to speak of the defects of others, the saint expressed his dissatisfaction,

* 1 Cor., xiii. 5.

and told them, if they did not desist, he should instantly blot out those lines, or withdraw from table. Thus ought every Christian to oppose firmly, and with all his influence, the utterance of calumny or detraction.—POSSIDIUS.

EXERCISES. — 1. What sins are prohibited by the Eighth Commandment? — 2. Why is the vice of lying so despicable in the eyes of God and so odious to man? — 3. What species of lie is the most criminal? — 4. What language does the Holy Scripture apply to calumniators? — 5. What is it that completes the enormity of calumny? — 6. What is required of those who have injured their neighbor by false reports? — 7. What is *detraction*? — 8. What are the sad consequences of detraction? — 9. What is the worst kind of detraction?

CHAPTER X.

Of the Ninth Commandment.

“THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR’S WIFE.”

God having, by the Sixth Commandment, forbidden all exterior actions contrary to purity, forbids by the Ninth, all thoughts and desires opposed to this virtue. To abstain from sinful actions, is not sufficient for the accomplishment of God’s law; the very desire of what is forbidden is criminal. God, who sounds the hearts of men, is not content with exterior purity; he wills that our very heart be pure. He will not permit us to desire that which He commands us to avoid. An evil thought defiles the soul, when it is deliberate and is consented to; that is, when entertained with reflection and delectation, it renders us guilty of sin. Evil thoughts, says the Scripture, separate from God. They inflict death on the soul, if they are not rejected as soon as perceived. Thus, the law of God goes to the root of the evil: it stifles it in its very birth. Experience shows, that no one falls, all at once, into the commission of criminal actions, but gradually. The evil commences with a thought; from this, reflected on, springs desire; and from desire, proceeds the external acts. “For from the heart,” says the Savior of the world, “come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies,

blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man.* Our divine Master places bad thoughts at the head of all crimes, because they are their principle and source. The true means, then, to prevent the desire of evil, is to reject the thought of it, and to prevent the evil action, is to stifle the desire. We cannot, indeed, prevent bad thoughts from entering our imagination, but it is in our power not to give occasion to them; and, when they do present themselves, we can, with the help of God, resist them, and refuse them the consent of our will. We must not expect, in this life, a peace exempt from combat. Virtue does not consist in never being attacked, but it consists in resisting courageously all the assaults of our passions, and in never giving occasion to temptation. If, notwithstanding our vigilance, temptation presents itself, we must turn away our attention, raise our heart to God, and apply ourselves to some useful occupation. Let the devil find you always employed, and his darts will fall harmlessly at your feet. Be faithful, and fear nothing. If the demon importune you, and seek to terrify you, listen not to him, and he will be vanquished. Attach yourself to God; He will never suffer you to be tempted above your strength. A temptation which you resist, does you no injury; it rather affords subject for triumph, and matter for eternal recompense.

St. Liguori, treating, in his "Precepts of the Decalogue," on the remedies against impure temptations, says: "When an impure image is presented to the mind, we must immediately endeavor to turn our thoughts to God, or to something which is indifferent. But the best rule is, instantly to invoke the names of Jesus and Mary, and to continue to invoke them until the temptation ceases, or, at least, till it becomes weak. When the temptation is violent, it is useful to renew our purpose of never consenting to any sin, saying, *My God, I wish to die, rather than offend Thee.* And then let us ask aid: *My Jesus, assist me; Mary, pray for me.* The names of Jesus and Mary have special power to banish the temptations of the devil." The same holy writer, in speaking of the devotion to the Mother of God, as

* Matt., xv. 19, 20.

a salutary remedy, recommends the practice of saying every morning three Hail Marys, in honor of the purity of the Blessed Virgin, in order to obtain, through her intercession, the grace of efficaciously resisting impure temptations. Having shown the efficacy of this means by some examples, he concludes by saying: "Let each one practise this little devotion, of saying three Hail Marys, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, adding after each Hail Mary, *Through thy pure and immaculate conception, O Mary, obtain for me purity and sanctity of body and soul.*" After enumerating various remedies against the detestable and dangerous vice of impurity, he adds, "But the first of all is to avoid the occasions of sin." It is, moreover, necessary to have a great diffidence in ourselves, and an unlimited confidence in God.

St. Bernardine of Sienna had so great a horror of all that could, in the least degree, wound chastity, that he blushed when any of his companions used any word contrary to the strictest propriety. His presence alone was sufficient to restrain them; and, on seeing him approach, they used to say, "Hush! hush! Bernardine is coming."

EXERCISES. — 1. What does God forbid by the Ninth Commandment? — 2. Why are evil desires condemned? — 3. What is the best means to prevent evil desires? — 4. Does virtue consist in never being tempted? — 5. If, notwithstanding our vigilance, temptation presents itself, what must we do? — 6. What remedies does St. Liguori prescribe against impure temptations? — 7. What practice does the same holy writer recommend on this subject?

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Tenth Commandment.

"THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S GOODS."

God having forbidden, by the Seventh Commandment, to take or retain the goods of another, forbids by the Tenth, the desire of possessing them to his prejudice. Remark here the essential difference between the laws of God and

those of man. The laws of man regulate only the exterior action, because man sees only the exterior; but the law of God forbids even the most secret thoughts and desires, because God sees the bottom of the heart. It is not forbidden to desire the goods of others, when we propose to obtain them legitimately, and with their consent; for otherwise, we could not purchase anything. When a person buys a house or land, it is from a desire to possess it; but this desire is perfectly legitimate, when, to become master of it, he employs no other than just means, and such as have the sanction of the law. This commandment forbids the desire of acquiring unjustly what belongs to our neighbor, an irregular attachment to riches, over-eagerness to acquire them, and that cupidity which St. Paul calls the root and beginning of every evil, and against which the Prophet Isaiah exclaims in the following terms: "Woe to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place: shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?"*

Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of the Gospel than that avidity for riches, which ever desires to acquire, is ever discontented with its acquisitions, is in continual apprehension of their suffering any diminution, and which amasses and accumulates, as if this earth were intended to be man's everlasting dwelling-place. A man addicted to this base passion, is solely occupied with the care of gratifying it. It is the subject of his thoughts by day, and even by night. While vainly endeavoring to procure happiness, which, he imagines, is to be found in the possession of wealth, he renders himself miserable, and consumes his years in perpetual torment.

"There is not," says the Scripture, "a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale."† What injustice, what violence, what fraud, does not this passion occasion! The covetous man counts as nothing conscience and salvation, provided he increases his treasure; in a word, money is his god, and he recognizes no other. Hence, St. Paul calls this pas-

* Isaiah., v, 8.

† Ecclus., x, 10.

tion an "idolatry;"* and our Blessed Savior, in his Gospel, declares, that "no one can serve two masters." "You cannot," he subjoins, "serve God and mammon."†

Our Lord does not, however, forbid the possession of riches, since his providence bestows them upon us; but He forbids us to "set our heart upon them," or to make our happiness consist in their possession. Riches are not condemned, but the inordinate desire of acquiring them. Shall it be affirmed, that transitory, perishable goods, which are acquired with a thousand pains, and preserved with an infinity of solicitude; which, one day, we shall part with in spite of us—entirely and for ever—whilst our grief for their loss shall be in proportion to the attachment which we bear them. Shall it be said, then, that goods of such a nature, and such a tenure, are calculated to confer happiness on their possessors? Well is it for the rich who obey the wise injunction of the holy King David: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them."‡

But, if it has pleased God that you be not in opulence, be satisfied with your condition; envy not the rich, against whom a woe has been pronounced, since they have their consolation here; covet not their wealth, since, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."§ On the contrary, "the poor in spirit" are declared "blessed; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."|| Follow, therefore, the counsel of our divine Redeemer: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."¶

Pythius, a king of Lydia, was exceedingly avaricious; and, though he had amassed great treasures, he expended nothing more than was requisite for the mere necessities

* Ephes., v, 5. † Matt., vi, 24 ‡ Ps. lxi, 11. § Matt., xix, 24.
 || Matt., v, 3. ¶ Matt., vi, 19, 20, 21.

of life. His queen, who was a person of good sense, took the following method, in order to correct him of this vice. On a certain day, when Pythius returned hungry from the exercise of the chase, she ordered his attendants to place before him dishes filled with gold, newly taken from the mines. The prince, charmed with the sight of so much gold, looked at it for some moments with the utmost complacency. His hunger, however, increasing, he called for food. "How!" said the queen, "do you not see before you what you love best in the world?" "What can you mean?" rejoined the king: "gold cannot, surely, stay my hunger." "Then, is it not great folly," said the queen, "to have such a passion for a thing which is utterly useless when shut up in your coffers? Believe me, gold is of real service to those only who judiciously exchange it for the conveniences of life." Pythius felt the full force of the lesson, to the great relief of his oppressed subjects, and from that time he became as liberal, as he had before been avaricious.

Tobias, when he was blind, hearing the bleating of a young kid which his wife had purchased with money obtained by the labor of her hands, became alarmed lest it might have been stolen, and said to her: "Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen; restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft."* When he imagined his last end approaching, he gave this advice to his son: "If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all."†

EXERCISES. — 1. Show us the essential difference which exists between the laws of God and those of man. — 2. When is it not forbidden to desire the goods of others? — 3. What does this commandment forbid? — 4. Is avidity for riches opposed to the spirit of the Gospel? — 5. What are the effects of the ardent desire we may have to enrich ourselves? — 6. Does our Lord forbid the possession of riches? — 7. How should we possess riches that they may not be detrimental to our soul?

* Tobias, ii, 21.

† Tobias, iv, 15.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

The Church has received power to command the faithful, and they are bound to obey her, because being guided by the Holy Spirit, she speaks to us by divine authority. God will not regard as his children, those who respect her not as their mother. This power of commanding resides in the pastors, whom He has appointed to rule and govern his Church, and to whom He has said: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me;"* and, again: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."† This power which the Church received from her divine Founder, she has never ceased to exercise. From the first dawning of Christianity, the Apostles have issued their ordinances; and we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that St. Paul went from city to city prescribing their observance, and that the early Christians received and obeyed them with cheerfulness. To refuse submission to those who govern in the name of God, would be to refuse submission to God himself. There are Six Precepts of the Church, and these every Catholic is bound to observe.

A person who, it was supposed, entertained strong prejudices against the decisions of the Holy See, was once addressed by a friend, in the following words: "Favor me with your advice; what opinions should I embrace? Should I hold those of the Pope, or ought I conform to yours?" The other at once replied, "Hold firmly on the trunk of the tree, and never separate yourself from it."—LASAUSSE.

"If we keep the Commandments of God," said a Catholic who had long neglected his religious duties, "He will not condemn us for our disregard of those of the Church." The reply which was made him is worthy of remembrance: "I have never known any one who despised the commands

* Luke x, 16.

† Matt., xviii, 17.

of the Church, to observe faithfully the commands of God."—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. Has the Church received the power to command the faithful, and are we bound to obey her? — 2. Has the Church always exercised this power? — 3. How many Precepts of the Church are there?

SECTION I.

1ST. PRECEPT.—“TO HEAR MASS ON SUNDAYS AND ALL HOLYDAYS OF OBLIGATION.”

Of the Festivals of the Church.

The First Precept of the Church obliges us to sanctify the festivals which she has instituted, by abstaining from servile work, and applying ourselves to works of piety and religion. Some of these feasts have been established to celebrate the mysteries of our Lord's life on earth,—his Incarnation, Nativity, Circumcision, Manifestation to the Gentiles, his Resurrection and Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

These mysteries are the sources of all the graces we receive from God, and of the salvation for which we hope; their remembrance ought to excite in us lively sentiments of gratitude, adoration, and confidence, and animate us to participate in their fruits by an increase of faith, hope, and love. The other feasts are destined to honor in the Blessed Virgin and the saints, the graces with which God has favored them, and the glory with which their fidelity has been crowned. On those days, their principal virtues are proposed to us, that, by the remembrance of their ineffable happiness, we may be encouraged to imitate their example. Penetrated with a sense of our own weakness, of which our experience continually admonishes us, we beg of them to use their influence with God to obtain for us, through the merits of our common Mediator, the grace of walking in their footsteps, in order that we may arrive at that eternal felicity which they now enjoy. Such is the

object of the Church in calling to our mind the great benefits of God, and placing before our view the example of his saints.

God, in the Old Law, prescribed to the Israelites a number of festivals, to perpetuate the remembrance of the wonders which He had wrought in their favor. On this divine model, the festivals of the Christian Church have been instituted, in order to honor God, to instruct the faithful, and to nourish their piety. The majesty of the divine offices, the sermons, the holy canticles with which, on these days, the temples of God resound, transport us in spirit to the times and places in which the mysteries we celebrate were accomplished, and we adore our Lord in them as if they actually passed before our eyes. These grand objects, rendered thus present by our faith, and seconded by the instructions and exhortations of our pastors, increase our fervor and piety. These festivals are, moreover, an occasion for the most simple among the faithful, and even for children themselves, to be instructed in the particular mystery that is celebrated, and to learn its history. The Church commands her pastors to teach these truths to the people, and fathers and mothers are strictly charged to teach them to their children. This is what God himself prescribed to the Israelites. Moses having commanded them, on part of God, to sacrifice every year the paschal lamb, and to celebrate the feast of the Azymes, he added: "And when your children shall say to you, What is the meaning of this service? you shall say to them: It is the victim of the passage of the Lord, when He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses."*

To sanctify the feasts of the Church, we should enter into her spirit, meditate attentively on the mystery which she celebrates, or on the life of the saint whom she commemorates, thank God for his benefits, and implore grace to make a profitable use of them. We should, on the festivals of the saints, excite ourselves to the practice of the virtues for which they were respectively most conspicuous, that

* Exodus, xii, 26, 27.

we may merit a participation in the happiness which they now enjoy ; and we should pray them to intercede for us with God, that we may obtain the graces necessary to secure our perseverance in his holy service.

The impious Nicanor, that furious enemy of God's people, having resolved to attack the Jews on the Sabbath day, " the Jews that were constrained to follow him, said : Do not act so fiercely and barbarously, but give honor to the day that is sanctified ; and reverence Him that beholdeth all things." Then " that unhappy man, " puffed up with an opinion of his own greatness and power, " asked, if there were a Mighty One in Heaven, that had commanded the Sabbath day to be kept. And when they answered : There is the living Lord himself in Heaven, the Mighty One, that commanded the seventh day to be kept. Then he said : And I am mighty upon the earth, and I command you to take arms, and to do the king's business. . . . But Machabeus ever trusted with all hope, that God would help them. And he exhorted his people not to fear the coming of the nations, . . . and now to hope for victory from the Almighty." Meanwhile, " Nicanor, and they that were with him, came forward with trumpets and songs, " and commenced the fight. But in punishment of his impiety his great army was totally overthrown by a handful, under the command of the valiant Judas. Nicanor himself was slain, with thirty-five thousand of his men, and his blasphemous tongue cut out, and given by pieces to birds.— 2 MACHABEES, ch. xv.

EXERCISES.—1. What does the First Precept of the Church ordain ?— 2. How are the feasts, instituted by the Church, divided ?— 3. What sentiments should the remembrance of the mysteries celebrated on the feasts of our Lord excite in us ?— 4. Why are there feasts in honor of the saints ?— 5. On what model have the festivals of the Christian Church been instituted ?— 6. What should we do to sanctify the feasts of the Church ?

SECTION II.

Of the Hearing of Mass.

Of all the works of piety by which we can sanctify Sundays and holydays, the hearing of Mass is, certainly, the first, and the most indispensable. The Church has expressly commanded it. Sacrifice is the noblest act of religion, and that which renders to God the most perfect homage. The obligation of assisting at Mass, on every day consecrated to his worship, is coeval with Christianity. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that on the first day of the week, the faithful assembled for the breaking of bread, that is, to offer the holy Victim, and to participate thereof. To satisfy this obligation, we must not only be present in body, but must hear the Mass with attention, respect and piety. We should unite ourselves with the Priest, who speaks to God in the name of all who assist at the holy Sacrifice, and offer ourselves in union with Jesus Christ, and the whole Church. To be wilfully distracted at Mass, to look curiously about, or to indulge in conversation, would not be hearing Mass, nor fulfilling the precept of the Church: it would be offering an outrage to Jesus Christ, that is, renewing the opprobriums of Calvary, and dishonoring religion. We should, therefore, occupy ourselves in prayer, during the whole time of Mass, and we would do well to use a book, a beads, or some other means of fixing the attention.

To sanctify the Sundays and holydays, the hearing of Mass alone is not sufficient; we should also assist, if in our power, at some of the other exercises of the Church,—as vespers, sermon, &c.; and should spend some time in prayer, pious reading, and in performing some of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy: instructing the ignorant in the way of salvation is specially recommended. The Church, in placing the hearing of Mass as the first duty of religion, does not exempt us from the others; and if she enforces more strictly this obligation, it is only be-

cause it is the most important, and that which, without strong reasons, can never be dispensed with.

The persecutions which the Christians underwent, did not prevent them from celebrating the feasts of the Church. A Christian young lady was on her way to the assembly of the faithful, when one of the Emperor Dioclesian's guards perceiving her, was struck with her modesty. He went rudely up to her, and said, "Stop!—whither are you going?" Fearing, from the tone of his voice, that he intended to insult her, she made, on her forehead, the sign of the cross, in order to obtain the aid of divine grace. The soldier, deeming himself affronted by her silence, seized her violently, and said, "Speak: who are you? whither are you going?" She courageously replied, "I am a servant of Jesus Christ, and am going to the assembly of the Lord." "You shall not go," said he; "you must sacrifice to the gods: to-day we worship the sun; you must worship him with us." He then attempted to pull off the veil which covered her face. This she endeavored to prevent, and said, "Wretch, Jesus Christ will punish you!" At these words, the soldier became furious, and, drawing his sabre, plunged it into the heart of the Christian virgin. She fell, bathed in her blood, but her holy soul flew to Heaven, there to receive an unfading crown of glory.—
FLEURY.

EXERCISES. — 1. What works of piety should especially claim our attention on Sundays and holydays? — 2. Show that the obligation of assisting at Mass on those days is coeval with Christianity. — 3. Is it enough to be present at Mass in body? — 4. How should we be occupied while assisting at Mass? — 5. Is the hearing of Mass alone sufficient to sanctify Sundays and holydays?

SECTION III

2ND PRECEPT.—"TO FAST AND ABSTAIN ON THE DAYS COMMANDED."

Of Fasting and Abstinence.

The Church commands us to fast during the entire Lent, on three days of each season of the year, called *quarter*

tense, and on the vigils or eves of certain solemn feasts. Fasting consists in taking but one meal in the day, and abstaining from flesh meat.

The fast of *Lent* is of the highest antiquity, and its institution dates even from the time of the Apostles. It was established to imitate the forty days' fast of our Lord in the desert, and to prepare us for worthily celebrating the feast of Easter. It has been observed in every age since the establishment of the Christian religion, and has been kept with greater rigor than the other fasts. The early Christians added to their fast longer prayers than ordinary, more abundant alms, watchings, and great recollection.

The fast of *quarter tense*, or *ember days*, was established to consecrate to penance the four seasons of the year, to draw down the divine blessings on the fruits of the earth, and to beg of God to give good Priests to his Church; for it is at these seasons, that persons destined to exercise the august functions of the sacred ministry, receive Holy Orders.

Vigils are the days which precede the principal feasts. They are called by this name, because, on the eve of great feasts, the faithful formerly assembled in the churches, and spent a part of the night in watching, in singing the praises of God, and in reading pious books, as is still observed in some places on the eve of Christmas. The faithful fast on these days, to dispose themselves to celebrate well the coming festival, and thus receive a larger share of the graces which God bestows on his Church in these holy times.

The law of fasting is imposed only on such of the faithful as have completed the twenty-first year of their age; and many, even of those, are dispensed with; some on account of infirmity or sickness; others on account of their laborious employments; others, again, on account of their old age, &c. Any necessary dispensation of this kind can be had by application to the Bishop, or to those whom he may have empowered to grant it. To violate, without necessity, the command of the Church, would be to disobey God himself, in whose name the Church commands us; for although there are many Christians who, without any legitimate cause, transgress the precept of fasting, yet the law

still subsists in all its vigor; nor do the multitude of transgressors either nullify or weaken the obligation. The law of fasting, it is true, does not oblige those who have not arrived at the age of twenty-one, yet such persons are strongly recommended to exercise themselves in this mortification, by retrenching some little of their ordinary meals, or, at least, by depriving themselves of some gratification, the privation of which would not be prejudicial to health. The same may be said of persons beyond that age, whose infirmities or avocations exempt them from the obligation of fasting; and they ought, by other good works, and by union of heart and mind with the faithful in their penitential exercises, endeavor to supply for their non-observance of the fast.

The Church forbids the use of flesh meat on Friday, in each week, in order to enfeeble the passions by mortifying the body, as well as to expiate our sins, and preserve within us the spirit of penance, which Jesus Christ so strongly recommends, and which is, as it were, the abridgment of the divine morality. We are sinners, and are, therefore, obliged to do penance; we are sick, and we ought to labor for our cure; we have sins to expiate, and it is by works of mortification that they can be expiated, and the divine justice satisfied; we have passions to subdue, and it is by retrenching what serves only to gratify them, that we can overcome them. The Church, knowing our want of this remedy, and that we have a repugnance to use it, comes to the help of our weakness, and gives an express command, in order to determine our will more efficaciously to submit to it. But, besides this general view, the Church, in imposing upon us the law of abstinence, has particular reasons also, of which we should not be ignorant. Friday has always been, with her, a day of penance and mortification, because it was on that day that Jesus-Christ died to redeem us, and it is just that we should participate in his sufferings, if we aspire to share in the grace of his redemption.

For this reason, in the primitive Church, every Friday was a fast day; but this fast was afterwards reduced to a

simple abstinence, and the Church made it a law, to which every Christian is bound to submit. Children, even, are not exempt from this law, when they can observe it; and nothing less than real necessity can dispense with it before God. When this necessity exists, it must be made known to the person's own pastor, whom the Church has invested with power to release from that obligation. Let no one, therefore, suffer himself to be imposed upon by the sophistries of the impious, who, making an erroneous application of the words of Scripture, say, that it is not meat which defileth a man.* The distinction of meats does not, indeed, of itself, honor God; but it does not thence follow that it is a matter of indifference whether we obey or disobey the authority which He himself has established; or whether we keep alive or extinguish the spirit of penance which He has so strongly recommended. Let us not imitate those who, for no reason, or under the slightest pretext, allow themselves the use of meat on days of abstinence. The more common this disorder is, the more should we deplore it, that we may not be drawn into the torrent by the bad example, which we daily witness. So criminal a violation of an important precept betrays great weakness of faith, and indifference to salvation on the part of those who are guilty of it.

A Catholic who had led a very criminal life, happened to read a book entitled *The History of Fasting*. He was particularly struck at learning how rigorously this duty was observed in the primitive ages of the Church, and thus reproached himself: "I call myself a Christian, and I have never fasted: had I lived when the penitential canons were enforced to the letter, to how many years of fasting should I not have been condemned, for the numberless sins which I have committed! The first Christians had no collation on their fasting days; all abstained from wine; and a great number contented themselves with bread and water; nor did they, before it was evening, take their only meal."

What he had read made so deep an impression upon

* Matthew, xv, 11.

him, that it never escaped his memory, and constantly gave birth to new reflections. God, in the end, touched his heart. Penetrated with a lively sorrow for his sins, he determined to submit to the most rigorous penance. With this design, he entered an austere monastery, where he observed the strictest silence, fasted continually with the utmost rigor, lay on a hard bed, and interrupted his sleep, during a great portion of the night, to sing the praises of God.—LASAUSSE.

In a city of France, a child, whose parents were strangers to the practice of religion, was preparing himself to receive, for the first time, the holy Sacrament of the Altar; and as it was usual in his parents' house to eat meat every day, without distinction, he accused himself of this with his other sins. His confessor gave him suitable directions for his future conduct, and these the child promised faithfully to obey.

His fidelity was soon tested: the Friday following, meat was served up, which, on being presented to him, he modestly refused, alleging the prohibition of the Church, and expressing, at the same time, his desire of a piece of bread instead. His father, enraged at his refusal, inhumanly ordered him to be shut up without a morsel of food till the following day. The poor child submitted without complaint, and without betraying the least ill-humor. His mother although as irreligious as her husband, felt compassion for him, and towards evening, carried to him privately some food, reprehending him, at the same time, for his opposition to his father's wishes and to her own. "Dear mother," replied the excellent boy, "had my father commanded me anything, the performance of which is not unlawful, I would have cheerfully obeyed; and although I refused to comply with his wishes, it certainly was not through obstinacy. He ordered me to remain here till to-morrow without food; this I can do without sin. Then you will not be displeased, I hope, at my not accepting what you have been so good as to bring me."

His mother, astonished at hearing him give expression to sentiments so religious and respectful, could not restrain

her tears, and going instantly to her husband, related what she had just heard. Struck with admiration, he mingled his tears with hers; and both acknowledged that their son was more rational and virtuous than themselves. Then entering the room in which he was confined, the father tenderly embraced him, expressed his regret at having treated him with such severity, and inquired who had instructed and so prudently advised him. Being informed, he, shortly after, waited on the confessor to testify to him his gratitude for the cure he had taken of his son, and begged him to hear his own confession. Thenceforward, he was as remarkable for his strict observance of the laws of the Church, as he had before been for his neglect of them; and his wife became equally devout and observant. Happy child, that thus opened his parents' eyes to the dangers of the course they were pursuing, and led them into the secure way of obedience and mortification!—
MARGUER.

EXERCISES.—1. What does the Church command by the Second Precept? — 2. In what does fasting consist? — 3. When and why was fasting established? — 4. Why the fast of *quarter tease*? — 5. What are *vigils*, and why are they so called? — 6. Why do the faithful fast on these days? — 7. On whom is the law of fasting imposed? — 8. Why does the Church forbid the use of flesh meat on Friday? — 9. Has she any particular reasons for imposing this law of abstinence? — 10. What does the violation of this precept betray?

SECTION IV.

3RD PRECEPT — “TO CONFESS OUR SINS AT LEAST ONCE
A YEAR.”

Of Annual Confession.

By this precept, the Church commands, that from the time at which we come to the use of reason, that is, when we become capable of distinguishing good from evil, we confess our sins at least once a year. The Church intends, by this wise regulation, to place bounds to the negligence of those bad Catholics who would persevere in their criminal habits, and pass several years without approach-

ing the tribunal of Penance. To fulfil this precept, we must present ourselves at least once a year at the tribunal of Penance, and make an humble confession of our sins to an approved Priest.

Although the Church, through condescension, does not command confession oftener than once in the year, lest she should dishearten those to whom this duty might appear painful and difficult, yet she ardently desires that we have recourse to it much more frequently, and she testifies this desire by the words, *at least*, which she has added to the precept. To receive the sacrament of Penance once within the year, does indeed, where there is no special law or custom requiring more frequent confession, satisfy the obligation which the Church imposes, but it does not correspond with her intention or satisfy her desire, particularly when a person has had the misfortune to commit mortal sin. God obliges all who are conscious of being in this unhappy state, not to defer their conversion. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee."* They must, therefore, return immediately to God by repentance, and wash away the defilement of sin in the sacrament of Penance. The precept of the Church, far from dispensing with this obligation, has for its special object to prevent us from remaining in sin, which is a wound inflicted on the soul. But when a person has received a wound, does he neglect for any long time to apply a remedy? Sin is a malady, more dangerous than any that can affect the body. When the body is attacked by sickness, do we delay an entire year to call in the physician? And is it not exposing one's self to die in mortal sin, to pass almost one's whole life in that alarming state? Experience shows that confession made but once a year, is not sufficient for us, if we would lead a Christian life. Those who confine themselves to one confession in the year, are almost always engaged in criminal habits, which they are not sincerely desirous of overcoming. Many, it is to be feared, make even this confession badly,

* Eccles., v, 8, 9.

and such persons do not comply with the command of the Church; for, at the same time that she makes Annual Confession imperative on her children, she obliges them to bring thereto the dispositions necessary for deriving fruit from it. To approach the sacrament of Penance without having made a due examination of conscience, and without true sorrow, is so far from fulfilling the precept of the Church, that it adds a new sin, a sacrilege, to our former load of guilt. The Church has not fixed the precise time of the year at which this confession should be made; but, as it is commanded in the same canon with the Paschal Communion, we may infer that she desires it should be made about the time of Lent, and thus serve as a preparation for Easter Communion. It is advisable that a person present himself at the holy tribunal of Penance, in the early part of Lent, in order that his confessor may advise him as to how he should prepare for that important action.

Venerable Bede, in his History of England, relates that Conrad, a pious prince, had among his courtiers a nobleman, to whom, on account of his great services, he was much attached, but who, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of the prince, remained several years without approaching the sacred tribunal of Penance. Being attacked with a very dangerous illness, the king visited him, and implored him to send for a confessor, but could not prevail on him to do so. Visiting him a second time, he found him at the last extremity, and conjured him not to die without seeking reconciliation with God. The unfortunate man, having remained some time without replying, at length looked at the king in the most frightful manner, and said, "It is no longer time; I am lost; hell is my portion for eternity!" Pronouncing these awful words, he expired in impenitence and despair.

A Clergyman, speaking to his flock on the folly of delaying their conversion, related to them the following parable. On my way hither to exercise the duties of my ministry, I beheld a most afflicting spectacle,—a young man thrown precipitately on the highway, his carriage broken, and he

himself, though not dead, yet suffering, in every member of his body, intense torture. The people approached him, sympathized with him, and besought him to accept the aid of a physician. "A physician!" said he; "yes; at Easter I shall have a physician!" Judge of the astonishment of the spectators: they imagined he had lost his senses. Be not surprised, my brethren, when I ask you, are not you like this unfortunate, foolish man? Have you not been running precipitately in the way of vice? have you not even suffered a dreadful fall; your more noble part—your soul—is it not more than wounded? is it not dead? We speak to you of a physician who is all-powerful, not of himself, but through the mission he has received from God, and who can bring that soul again to life; and you say, "At Easter—at Easter, I will have recourse to the physician. And how many are there among you, dearest brethren, who do not put even this limit to their delay?" This comparison made a lively impression on the minds of the auditors, many of whom approached, soon after, the tribunal of Penance.—MERAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. What obligations are imposed on us by the Third Precept of the Church? — 2. Why does the Church command us to confess *at least* once a year? — 3. Will one confession per year suffice for persons who would lead a Christian life? — 4. Will confession without the necessary dispositions, fulfil the precept of Annual Confession? — 5. At what time is this confession to be made?

SECTION V.

4TH. PRECEPT.—"TO RECEIVE WORTHILY THE BLESSED EUCHARIST AT EASTER, OR WITHIN THE TIME APPOINTED."

Of the Paschal Communion.

The Church, by this precept, ordains, that each one of the faithful should receive, at Easter, or within a certain specified time, the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and that in his own parish church, or in one approved by his

lawful superior for that purpose ; and she threatens with excommunication all who neglect to comply with this important obligation.

Children who have made their First Communion are obliged to observe this precept. What occasioned the Church to make this law, was the indifference shown by many Christians for this august sacrament, notwithstanding the declaration of our Lord, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."* The primitive Christians communicated frequently ; they considered the Holy Eucharist as the daily bread of the children of God ; they felt no sorrow more sensibly than that caused by their being deprived of this divine food. Soon, however, charity began to grow cold ; the holy table to be less frequented ; and many, for several years, neglected to receive it. To prevent so great a disorder, the Church requires all her children, under severe penalties, to receive the Holy Communion, at least, at Easter or thereabout. And although she obliges us to one Communion only in the year, yet she desires that we approach oftener ; for example, on the solemn festivals.

The Church, in the Council of Trent, declares that it would be desirable that all the faithful should, in order to partake more abundantly of the fruits of the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, communicate when they assist at it. By communicating at Easter only, we indeed comply with the precept of the Church, but not with her wishes. In effect, it is difficult that one Communion in the year, should preserve and strengthen the spiritual life of the soul ; it is even to be feared that a person, by making only one, does not satisfy the precept, since he exposes himself to communicate unworthily ; and a bad Communion, so far from satisfying the obligation of the precept, is a horrible sacrilege, and an outrage on the Church.

The Church commands us to communicate with respect ; and this respect consists, principally, in bringing to the holy table a conscience free from mortal sin. For this reason, she permits the Paschal Communion to be delayed for some

* John. vi, 54.

time, when there appears a just and reasonable cause; and, certainly, no cause can be more just and reasonable than when time is needed for being prepared to approach with purity of conscience. The time granted for this purpose should, however, be employed in making due preparation, and every effort made even to abridge it; for, although the specified time for compliance for all the faithful may have passed, the obligation of communicating subsists so long as the precept is not complied with.

A man who had been leading a very irregular life, waited on his parish-priest, and told him he was desirous of complying with his Easter duty. The pastor applauded his good intention, but desired him to remember, that the precept required that he should receive *worthily*, and, therefore, that that part of it should be strictly attended to. "I wish," said the man, "to communicate to-morrow." "I have reason to believe," said the Priest, "you are not sufficiently disposed to do so. I never see you at Mass either on Sundays or holydays; I have been told you frequently work on those days, and that you are altogether regardless of the fasts of the Church." "I fast always on Good-Friday, sir," said the man. "Yes," replied the pastor, "and you drink to intoxication on other days, and you have instructed your children so well, that they curse and swear like yourself." "Sir," said the parishioner, "I acknowledge that I have been very wicked, but I wish to confess, and to receive Communion at the time prescribed." "Your confession," replied the pastor, "may commence forthwith, but as to the Paschal Communion, you cannot be permitted to receive it until you shall have amended your life."—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What does the Church ordain by this precept? — 2. What occasioned the Church to make this law? — 3. How did the primitive Christians approach the holy table? — 4. Do we comply with the wishes of the Church in communicating at Easter only? — 5. Why not? — 6. To fulfil the Fourth Precept of the Church, in what disposition are we to communicate?

SECTION VI.

5TH PRECEPT—" TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUPPORT OF OUR PASTORS."

Of Supporting our Pastors.

The Fifth Precept of the Church ordains, that we contribute to the support of our pastors, since they dedicate their whole time and labor to the spiritual welfare of our soul. That the pastors of the Church, who are rendering spiritual assistance to the faithful, should receive from them what is requisite for a decent supply of their corporal wants, is no more than common justice. Having renounced every means of procuring their livelihood, in order to consecrate themselves to their sacred functions, they have a just and natural right to be maintained by those, to whose service they dedicate their time and labor.

No sooner had God instituted a religion among the Israelites, than He made choice of the tribe of Levi for his own immediate service, and to be the Priests and pastors of his people. Having made this selection, He ordained that the tenth part of whatever belonged to the people should be consecrated to Him. "And the Lord said to Aaron: Behold I have given thee the charge of my first fruits. All things that are sanctified by the children of Israel, I have delivered to thee and to thy sons for the priestly office, by everlasting ordinances. And I have given to the sons of Levi, all the tithes of Israel for a possession, for the ministry wherewith they serve Me."*

When our Lord sent the Apostles to preach, he expressly ordained this duty: "Go," said he, "behold, I send you as lambs among wolves. . . . Into whatsoever house you enter. . . . in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they have; for the laborer is worthy of his hire."† "Know you not," says St. Paul, inculcating the same obligation, "that they who work in the holy place, eat the things that are of the holy place ;

* Numbers, xviii, 8, 21.

† Luke, x, 3, 5, 7.

and they that serve the altar, partake with the altar? So also the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel.”*

So well was this injunction of the Apostle—“Let him that is instructed in the word, communicate to him that instructeth him, in all good things,”†—obeyed in the primitive ages of Christianity, that, as Ecclesiastical History informs us, the voluntary offerings of the people were amply sufficient to supply their Pastors with a decent support. But in process of time, the love of the world and its vanities becoming predominant among many of the faithful, they grew remiss in the performance of this duty. And as our divine Lord had ordained, in general terms, that “they who preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel,” without specifying what proportion of their worldly substance the people were to contribute, the Church interposed her authority, and framed laws on this subject. These laws have been confirmed by the civil powers of all Christian states, but have been modified to suit the different dispositions and circumstances of the people.

EXERCISES.—1. What does the Fifth Precept of the Church ordain?—2. Why is it just to support our Pastors?—3. Show that God made a law, for the support of those whom He had chosen for his immediate service.—4. By what words does our Lord expressly ordain this duty?—5. What does St. Paul say on this subject?

SECTION VII.

SIXTH PRECEPT.—“NOT TO SOLEMNIZE MARRIAGE AT THE FORBIDDEN TIMES, NOR TO MARRY PERSONS WITHIN THE FORBIDDEN DEGREES OF KINDRED, OR OTHERWISE PROHIBITED BY THE CHURCH, NOR CLANDESTINELY.”

Laws relating to Marriage.

The Sixth Precept of the Church prohibits marriage to be solemnized in certain penitential seasons; namely, from the first Sunday of Advent to the expiration of Twelfth-

* 1 Cor., x, 13, 14.

† Gal., vi, 9.

day ; and from Ash-Wednesday to Low Sunday, both included.

All mankind have an aversion to marriages between persons who are nearly related. The Church determines to what degree of kindred the prohibition of such marriages is to be extended ; and it is fixed to the fourth degree. Brothers and sisters are in the first degree of kindred ; the the children of brothers and sisters are in the second degree, and are called cousins-german ; the children of cousins-german are in the third degree ; and the children of these last are in the fourth degree of kindred,—being four steps from the common stock, in which the parties are united in the same father and mother. The Church also prohibits marriage to be contracted between those who are connected by affinity from lawful marriages within the same degrees. There are circumstances in which it may not be improper to dispense with the rigor of this law ; for, where there exists a power of making laws, there exists a power of dispensing with them. But a dispensation should not be sought without good cause.

Clandestine marriages are neither valid nor binding before God or the Church, wherever the decree of the Council of Trent relating to such marriages has been published and received. The Church declares every marriage clandestine, unless the man or woman's parish Priest, or a Priest with his or the Bishop's leave, is present thereat, together with two or three witnesses. Every clandestine marriage is grievously sinful, and those who contract, solemnize, or witness, such marriages, are sharers in the guilt.

EXERCISES. — 1. What does the Sixth Precept of the Church prohibit ?
— 2. To what degree of kindred is the prohibition of marriage extended ?
— 3. Are clandestine marriages valid or binding before God or the Church ?

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Sin.

Sin, which is a wilful transgression or violation of the law of God, is the greatest of all evils, since it is offensive to God, who is the Sovereign Good. It is, moreover, a monstrous ingratitude; for, by sin, we offend a God who created us, who preserves us, and who daily bestows upon us new blessings. What turpitude for the sinner, so cherished, to outrage the best and tenderest of fathers! To comprehend still better the enormity of sin, let us consider what its expiation cost our divine Redeemer; for this reflection alone is capable of exciting a lively horror of it. Reflect also on the terrible chastisements with which God punishes it. All the evils in the universe, the miseries of life, sickness, death,—all are the consequences of a single sin, the sin of our first father.

Sin is divided into two kinds, *original* and *actual*. Original sin is that which we inherit from our first parents, and in which we were all conceived and born. Actual sin is that which we ourselves commit by the act and consent of our own will, after having come to the use of reason. Actual sin may be committed in four ways; by thoughts, words, actions, and omissions. The law of God forbids not only the bad action, but even the desire of it. It not only arrests the hand and tongue, it regulates, also, the mind and heart. It is in the heart that the disobedience commences; the heart is the source of sin, the words and actions are only the exterior execution of what the heart dictates.

Of actual sin there are two kinds, *mortal* and *venial*. A sin is mortal, when it is committed with full and deliberate consent, in a matter of weight; it is venial, when the matter is light, or even when it is grave, if the consent is not full and deliberate.

Mortal sin is the greatest of all evils. By it we lose sanctifying grace and our right to a heavenly inheritance. It kills the soul by separating it from God, who is its life; and it renders us deserving of eternal damnation. When a person has the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, he

becomes a slave of the devil, an enemy of God, and an object of his hatred and eternal vengeance. Can any misfortunes exceed these? What, then, should be our horror of mortal sin! With what care should we not avoid it! Should we not be disposed to suffer every evil, that the mind can conceive, or the body endure, rather than commit it! "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent—the teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men."* Were we to meet a serpent in our path, and had reason to fear that we should be bitten or devoured, with what haste would we not flee from it! Let us do as much, at least, for the preservation of our soul, as we would for that of our body. If we ever be so unhappy as to fall into mortal sin, let us repent without delay, make frequent acts of heartfelt sorrow and of the love of God, and go to confession as soon as possible.

Venial sin, even, should be avoided with all possible care; for, although it does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, nor deserve eternal damnation, it hurts the soul, diminishes its love for God, and renders it deserving of temporal chastisement. Venial sin, though small in comparison with mortal sin, is a great and pernicious evil, since it is an offence voluntarily committed against a God of infinite goodness and majesty. Moreover, venial sin leads the soul insensibly to the gulf of mortal sin, according to the express declaration of the Holy Ghost, "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."† We should, then, be careful not to commit the smallest sin deliberately, but should rather avoid, according to the precept of the Apostle, even the very "appearance of evil."

Wise and holy replies to sinful proposals. "By sinning I would disobey God, in order to obey the devil:—what injustice, ingratitude, and folly!"—"How, then, can I," said the Patriarch Joseph, "do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"‡—"It is better for me to fall into your hands," and be put to death, "than to sin in the sight of

* Ecclus., xxi, 2, 3.

† Ecclus., xix, 1.

‡ Gen., xxxix, 9.

the Lord,"* said the chaste Susanna.—"What wouldst thou ask, or learn of us?" said the eldest of the seven Machabees—"We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of God."†—"You propose that I revolt against God by committing this sin; but how will you indemnify me, if I thereby lose my immortal soul?"—"I have in God a Master infinitely great, good, and liberal, who has ever loved me, and has promised me eternal life, glory, and felicity;—and you would wish me to disobey, offend, abandon, and outrage Him; to declare myself his enemy, and consent to incur his anger, indignation, and vengeance!"

"Speak not to me of sinning, till you can show me a place where God cannot behold me, where He cannot deprive me of life in an instant, and precipitate my soul into hell."

EXERCISES.—1. What is sin?—2. How may we comprehend the enormity of sin?—3. How many kinds of sin are there?—4. In how many ways may actual sin be committed?—5. How many kinds of actual sin are there?—6. When is a sin mortal, and when, venial?—7. Why is mortal sin the greatest of all evils?—8. What are the sad consequences of mortal sin?—9. What should a person do who has had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin?—10. Should we carefully avoid venial sin?—11. Repeat some of the replies made by persons who were solicited to commit sin.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE CAPITAL SINS.

All the sins which men commit are ordinarily reduced to seven, which are called *capital*, because they are, as it were, the source, or principle of all other sins. The capital sins are *pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth.*

Parable. A young man, crossing a certain forest, was attacked by a frightful monster, having a body like a lion, and seven heads like that of the serpent. The monster sprang towards him from its den, its seven heads erect, its eyes sparkling like fire, and made the air resound with its

* Dan., xiii, 23.

† 1 Mach., vii, 2.

horrible hissings. The young man, not in the least disconcerted, stood firmly, and taking the axe which, according to the custom of the country, hung at his side, he, at one blow, struck off four of its heads. At a second blow, he cut off two of the remaining heads; and then, seeing the monster apparently dead, he departed, thinking it needless to cut off the seventh. But he had not gone forward many paces when the monster, already reanimated, darted furiously upon him, and dragging him to its den, devoured him.

This monster represents the seven deadly sins, against which we must fight courageously with the arms of faith. It is not sufficient to deprive it of six of its heads; if you leave it one, it will prove your ruin. What would it avail to have conquered *many* passions, if you permit *one* to conquer you? Examine, then, if in fighting against this hydra, you have left one head upon it; for one will be sufficient to destroy you. See if, in combating your passions, you have not spared some favorite; for a single vice, if cherished, will be sufficient to cause your eternal destruction. The victory, to be secure, must be complete. We must persevere to the end in fighting, and must never grow weary of the combat, nor must we take repose until we have defeated every enemy. Should we act otherwise, we would expose ourselves to be seized on when we deem ourselves most secure, and dragged down into that abyss from which no one returns.—GIRAUDEAU.

EXERCISES. — 1. Under what principal heads are all the sins that men commit classed? — 2. Show us by the example which you have just read, the necessity of overcoming all our passions.

SECTION I.

Of Pride.

Pride is an inordinate, or disorderly, esteem and love of ourselves, which leads us to prefer ourselves to others, and to refer everything to ourselves, and not to God. This vice is highly offensive to God, because by it we give glory to ourselves on account of his gifts, instead of referring

all the glory to Him, from whom they have been received. "What hast thou," says St. Paul, "that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* From this vice spring vanity and an inordinate desire of esteem and praise. The proud man desires to be admired and applauded for whatever he does. When he has obtained the approbation of men, he is content; he receives flattery with avidity and pursues it with eagerness. Pride endeavors carefully to hide our defects, and affects the possession of virtues, to which we are strangers; it induces us to seek continually to draw upon us the public gaze, and to appear better than we really are. From it proceeds contempt of our neighbor. The elevated opinion which it causes us to entertain of ourselves and of our merits, leads us to despise others, and, believing ourselves their superiors, to treat them and speak to them with haughtiness and disdain. From pride also comes disobedience. The proud man will not submit to the orders of superiors; he disregards their advice; the exercise of their authority over him pains and angers him; nor does he even believe that he ought to obey. Pride makes us forgetful of our eternal interests; it causes us to neglect totally the care of our soul. Its continual care is to deck out the body with worldly adornments, and to exhibit this idol of flesh and blood in every circle, in order to attract the admiration of beholders. Even decency and good manners are sometimes sacrificed to the pretended claims of fashion and custom. Oh, how detestable is the vice of pride! How carefully we ought to avoid it! "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words," says the venerable Tobias, "for from it all perdition took its beginning."† "Pride is hateful before God and men:"‡ and St. James declares, that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." §

Christian humility is the virtue opposite to pride, and is the foundation of all virtues. The humble man is conscious of the fund of misery that is within him; he despises

* 1 Corinthians, iv, 7.

† Tobias, iv, 14.

‡ Ecclus., x, 7.

§ James, iv, 6.

himself, and is willing to be despised by others. If we reflect upon what we really are, how many subjects of humiliation do we not discover! Not to speak of the infirmities of the body—that body which came forth from dust, and that into dust shall quickly return—let us direct our attention to the state of our soul. What do we behold? Ignorance in the mind; corruption in the heart; an inclination to evil; inconstancy in good! Of ourselves we are nothingness and sin; and whatever we have good and laudable, as the endowments of mind and body, the gifts of nature and grace, are all derived from God. A man deeply impressed with this truth is far from being proud of himself, he is far from seeking vain applause or empty honors, if he perceives good qualities in himself, he refers the glory of them to God; he reflects more upon his bad than upon his good qualities, and humbles himself for them in the presence of God. Happy the humble of heart, because upon such shall be showered the blessings of the Lord! But woe to the haughty and presumptuous, for they shall be covered with everlasting confusion!

Proud of a title which he dishonored by his vices, a nobleman, wishing to humble a man of low extraction, but of great merit, reproached him with the meanness of his birth. Far from being irritated, the good and sensible man said, with a smile, "If my origin dishonors me, you certainly dishonor your origin." Learn, hence, to respect virtue wherever it is found, and never forget that true merit depends on our conduct, not on our possessions or our station.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is pride? — 2. Trace the portrait of the proud man. — 3. What are the principal effects of this vice? — 4. To whom is pride odious? — 5. What virtue is opposed to pride? — 6. On what should we reflect to combat pride?

SECTION II.

Of Covetousness, or Avarice.

Avarice is an inordinate, or disorderly, attachment to the goods of the earth. It is not a sin to possess riches; but it is sinful to set our heart upon them, to seek them with eagerness, to place our happiness in them, or to employ unlawful means to acquire them.

Avarice produces forgetfulness of God, and indifference to salvation. He who is solely intent on amassing temporal goods, has transferred his affections from God to them, and is little affected with the desire or hope of eternal treasures. The avaricious man is a stranger to compassion, and callous to the miseries of his distressed fellow-creatures. His avarice renders him insensible, even, to his own wants; he prefers his money to his health, nay, even to life itself; he deprives himself of necessaries, lest he should diminish his adored treasure; he accumulates riches, without making use of them; he is indigent, in the midst of wealth; he is in want of all things, in the midst of abundance. What folly! What infatuation!

This vice, in fine, produces duplicity. The avaricious man, that he may possess what he covets, employs lying, fraud, and injustice. No one is more unjust than he who loves money: "Such a one," says the Holy Ghost, "setteth even his own soul to sale."* He who is enslaved to this passion, is no longer influenced by good faith, honor, or conscience; he becomes unjust, violent,—an impostor; he uses all means, even the most criminal, to augment his hateful hoard, to which he has attached his heart; and what is most deplorable is, that his attachment is strengthened with age. Time and reflection enfeeble other passions; but avarice seems to acquire new strength and vigor as old age advances. The nearer the avaricious man approaches that fatal moment, when he must quit all, the more fondly does he cling to his riches, and the greater precaution does he take for a future that to him, shall

* Ecclus., x, 10.

never come. "Fool," says our Lord in his Gospel, "this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"* To others he shall leave his riches:—a winding sheet, a coffin, and a grave, are all that shall remain to him.

Guard yourself vigilantly from a passion so dangerous. Instructed in the school of Jesus Christ, "lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: . . . but lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven; † and endeavor to acquire the virtue opposed to avarice. This virtue is a Christian detachment from earthly things, whether we live in poverty or in opulence. If we are poor, let us not envy the rich, nor desire their possessions. The goods of this world are frail and perishable, and can never fully satisfy the heart of man. The just, though poor, are happier with the little they possess, than the wicked, though in affluence. "Fear not, my son," said the venerable old man Tobias; "we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God." ‡ "Having food and wherewith to be covered," says St. Paul, "with these we are content." § If, on the contrary, we are rich, let us remember that we shall carry nothing out of this world; and let us give alms abundantly, that we may thus have imperishable riches laid up for us in Heaven.

A man, who, in early life, had been liberal and generous, at a later period, received a great increase of fortune, became passionately fond of money, and thought of nothing else than to increase his wealth. Tormented with the fear of being robbed of his treasure, he had a vault, with an invisible iron door, made in his cellar. There he secretly deposited his hoards of gold and silver, and thither he frequently retired, to view those riches on which his heart was fixed. On a certain day, when entering this gloomy retreat, he forgot to draw the key out of the lock and take it with him. When he had sufficiently indulged in the contemplation of his wealth, he prepared to return; but the door

* Luke, xii, 20.

† Matt., vi, 19, 20.

‡ Tobias, iv, 23.

§ 1 Tim., vi, 8.

was locked, and he found himself imprisoned within the vault. Imagine his despair in this moment of horror. In vain did he try to force the door ; in vain did he endeavor to make his cries be heard. No one could hear his voice ; no one was acquainted with his secret. His family, not knowing what had become of him, were extremely uneasy. They sought him in every part of the town and neighborhood, but in vain ; and, at length, concluded that he had come to some untimely end. Several weeks after, a locksmith, who then resided in a distant town, hearing of the event, recollected that this person had formerly given him a secret order to make an iron door, with a spring lock ; and it occurred to him, that the unhappy man might possibly have shut himself within, and so perished. He mentioned the circumstance to the family, and conducted them to the spot where the secret door was placed. They opened it and, to their utter astonishment, beheld the body of the wretched man, half devoured by worms ! The whole mystery of his avarice was at once unfolded. They searched, and found immense riches within the vault ; “treasures of wrath,” in the sight of the Almighty, which the unhappy miser had heaped together, for his own condemnation.—BAUDRAND.

EXERCISES.—1. What is avarice ?—2. What are the effects of avarice ?—3. Explain how avarice destroys every noble sentiment.—4. Does this passion become weaker with age ?—5. What words of our divine Lord show us the folly of attaching ourselves to riches ?—6. Does wealth secure happiness ?

SECTION III.

Of Lust.

To conceive a horror of this shameful vice, consider its unhappy effects, as enumerated when treating of the Sixth Commandment. It is defined a criminal affection for those pleasures which are contrary to Christian chastity.

Jesus Christ, whilst on earth, showed a particular love for chastity, and for those who practised it. “Blessed,” said he, in his sermon on the mount, “are the clean o.

heart, for they shall see God."* The virtue of chastity assimilates us to the angels; nay, as St. Chrysostom says, it makes us even superior to the angels, by the victories gained over the temptations of impurity, of which they have no experience. "Chastity," according to the holy Fathers, "is the ornament of manners, the honor of the body, and the ground-work of sanctity." In fine, the Scripture says, that "no price is worthy of a continent soul."† Everything that is good may be expected from a chaste youth; because, as the spirit of God cannot dwell in impure hearts, so it takes delight to communicate itself to chaste souls.

Vigilance and prayer are the safeguards of chastity. "Watch ye, and pray," says Jesus Christ, "that you enter not into temptation."‡ Guard your eyes, that they may not rest upon dangerous objects; your ears, that they may not hearken to evil discourse; your mind, by banishing therefrom all ideas and thoughts contrary to purity; your heart, by stifling bad desires in their very birth. "Banish," says St. Bernard, "the wicked thought and whatever it presents, at the very beginning. If you banish it, it will leave you; or, if it does not, it can do you no injury, so long as you have a horror of it. The thought which is not rejected, produces pleasure; pleasure leads to consent; consent, to action; action, to habit; habit, to a kind of necessity; and necessity, to eternal death."

In temptations against purity have recourse to God, saying, *Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me*; or any of the forms previously recommended. Pray often and fervently to be preserved from these temptations, or for the grace to overcome them; and for the same end, recommend yourself frequently to the Mother of God, the Queen of Virgins, and to your Guardian Angel and holy patrons.

In a city of France there dwelt a young man, whose piety and good conduct excited general admiration, and served as an example to persons of the same age. Going one

* Matt., v, 8.

† Ecclus., xxvi, 19.

‡ Mark, xiv, 38.

Sunday to the church to perform his accustomed devotions, he was met by two of his fellow-students, who were far less virtuous than himself. They invited him to accompany them to a tavern not far distant, but he instantly rejected the invitation. At length, however, overcome by their solicitations, he went or, rather, suffered himself to be drawn thither by them. Being seated, he, in the beginning, drank with great reluctance, afterwards with pleasure, and then to excess. Finally, his passions being no longer under command, he fell into a sin against purity, and, awful to relate, he had no sooner committed it, than he was struck dead!—O God! how terrible are thy judgments! how inscrutable are thy ways!—COLLET.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is lust? — 2. What are the charms and recompense of chastity? — 3. What are the best means to preserve this angelic virtue? — 4. What instruction does St. Bernard give for its preservation?

SECTION IV.

Of Anger.

That anger is called holy, which, excited by zeal, impels us to reprehend, in strong terms, those whom meekness could not correct. Such is the anger of a father or a master, at witnessing disorders which it is his duty to prevent. Our blessed Lord was moved by this kind of anger, when he drove from the temple, those who had violated its sanctity; but the anger classed among the capital sins is not of this character; it is an impetuous motion of the soul, exciting us to repress with violence what is displeasing to us. It proceeds from a bad principle, from some violent passion existing in the heart, and which encounters some obstacle to its gratification. The proud man, for example, is incensed against whatever wounds his vanity or thwarts his ambition; the avaricious is irritated when anything occurs to disarrange his projects of increasing his gain; the voluptuary is indignant at whatever opposes his pleasures. This anger is neither according to God, nor conformable to the dictates of reason. Anger agitates the soul, and blinds the

understanding. The tumult which it excites interiorly, manifests itself on the countenance and the whole exterior: the eyes redden; the voice falters; the body trembles; the soul vents its rage against the objects of its anger, in words the most abusive, in slanders the most envenomed, in calumny the most atrocious, in imprecations against itself, in blasphemies against God! In fine, no violence however unwarrantable, no cruelties however revolting, are sufficient to satisfy the resentment of the angry man, or to assuage his fury. Oh! how dreadful are the effects of this blind passion! We ought to accustom ourselves, from time to time, to subdue the first motions of anger; never to speak a word in a moment of irritation; and, continually, to exercise ourselves in the practice of Christian meekness.

Meekness is a virtue which enables us to support, in a spirit of submission and conformity to the will of God, whatever contradictions or calamities befall us. It represses sudden revolts and sallies of passion; prevents us from exhibiting any sign of impatience; from suffering disrespectful or complaining words to escape us, when thwarted or provoked; and, finally, it enables us to behave politely and modestly, not only towards the good and gentle, but also towards the ill-tempered and obstinate, whom it teaches us to endeavor to gain by complaisance and acts of kindness.

Rufinus relates that a certain solitary, being frequently moved to anger in his monastery, said within himself, "I will retire into the desert, where I shall have no intercourse with men, and no longer be tempted to anger." He accordingly withdrew into the desert, and took up his residence in a cave. Congratulating himself one day on his happy escape from all occasions of anger, it happened that his pitcher, which he had just filled with water, was, by accident, overturned. This happening a second, and even a third time, so excited his predominant failing, that he took the pitcher, and dashing it against the ground, broke it into pieces. Reflecting afterwards on what he had done, he said: "The demon of anger has again triumphed over me;

although I am alone in this desert, he has found means of tempting me. Since, then, this passion accompanies me everywhere, and that it must everywhere be combated, I will this moment return to my monastery.—VIE DES PERES DU DESERT.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is meant by a holy anger? — 2. What is the character of the anger classed among the capital sins? — 3. What does this violent passion produce? — 4. What are the fruits of meekness and patience which are opposed to anger?

SECTION V.

Of Gluttony.

Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. To feel pleasure in the use of food is not forbidden; and, since meat and drink are necessary for the preservation of health and life, it is a wise dispensation of the Almighty to season these aliments with an agreeable relish. We abuse this benefit when, in eating and drinking, we seek sensual indulgence only, whereas our intention should be to satisfy the necessity we are under of using food, in order to be able to fulfil our duties, and to serve God. "Whether you eat or drink," says the Apostle, "or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God."* To observe this lesson of St. Paul, we must not, at our meals, think only of gratifying the body, but of following the order of God's providence; for God wills that we thus preserve our life. To seek, in the use of food, merely to please the senses, would be gluttony,—a vice unworthy of a rational being, and one that debases the soul, clouds the intellect, ruins the health, and shortens life. "Gluttony," as one of the ancients has well remarked, "has killed more than the sword." It produces drunkenness and excess in eating—vices which degrade a man below the very beasts of the field,—but which the man who is truly polite, well educated, and prudent, is ever careful to avoid. Gluttony, moreover, produces sensuality, and begets a contempt for the laws of the Church. A man enslaved to this vice is but little dis-

* 1 Cor., x, 31.

posed to observe the fasts and abstinences of obligation ; he is a stranger to mortification ; those laws which prescribe certain privations, he considers as an insupportable burden ; upon the slightest pretext, he seeks dispensations from them ; and, at length, he not only violates the precept of fasting, but even uses, without remorse, forbidden meats. In fine, gluttony produces dissension. From intemperance spring quarrels, rage, violence, and numberless misfortunes. "Who," says the Scripture, "hath woe ? whose father hath woe ? who hath contentions ? who falls into pits ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups."*

We ought to entertain the greatest horror of a vice so degrading and so unworthy of man, and much more of a Christian ; and practise a truly Christian sobriety. This virtue confines eating and drinking within the bounds of necessity ; it promotes health, and, as Holy Writ assures us, it "shall prolong life," while the same authority declares, that "by surfeiting many have perished ; for, in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler."† A Christian should avoid delicacies, and what serves but to gratify sensuality ; in a word, he should think only of imitating our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in subjecting himself to the humiliating necessity of using food, wished to become our model in this, as in every other action. Bear continually in mind the salutary advice which he has given us, in these words : "Take heed to yourselves, lest, perhaps, your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life : and that day (the day of death or of judgment) come upon you suddenly. For as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth."‡ The most proper means of recalling to memory the rules of temperance, and of obtaining strength to observe them, is to recite, devoutly, the *grace before and after meals*. By faithfully observing this Christian practice,

* Prov., xxiii, 29, 30. † Eccles., xxxvii, 33, 34. ‡ Luke, xxi, 34.

we shall draw down upon ourselves the blessing of God, and obtain grace not to offend Him.

There is nothing, perhaps, in the annals of human depravity, more appalling than what occurred in Africa, in the time of St. Augustine. A young man, named Cyril, was exceedingly addicted to drunkenness, and passed the greater part of his time in taverns, with companions as profligate as himself. One day having indulged in his usual excesses, he returned home, and, in his drunken fit, plunged a dagger into the breast of one of his sisters who happened to come in his way. Her father, alarmed by her cries, flew to her assistance; but the unnatural wretch, grown more furious at the sight of blood, killed his father also. He next stabbed another sister, who had endeavored to snatch from his hand, the dagger uplifted against his father. What crimes perpetrated by a single individual! What a series of horrors enacted in a single day! St. Augustine was informed of the particulars of this shocking tragedy, and, although he had already preached twice that day, he reassembled his flock, and, with tearful eyes, acquainted them of the shocking occurrence. The whole congregation expressed their grief and horror in sighs and lamentations; and greatly did they wonder how any man could commit crimes so monstrous and revolting. St. Augustine profited of this circumstance, to show to what horrible excesses the indulgence of a single unmortified passion may lead; and the tears which accompanied his observations, spoke more feelingly to the hearts of his auditory, than even the eloquent words he uttered.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is gluttony, and what must be done to avoid it? — 2. What are the fatal consequences of this vice? — 3. Explain how gluttony degrades man. — 4. What rules should be followed in eating and drinking?

SECTION VI.

Of Envy.

Envy is a criminal repining or sadness at our neighbor's good. The man addicted to this vice, feels himself wounded by the merits of others ; he cannot suffer himself to be surpassed, or even equalled, by them ; he is chagrined at seeing them possessed of talents or virtues which he does not possess, or which he desires to possess exclusively. If the advantages which he observes in others, inspired him with a desire of acquiring the like, or of imitating them, it would not be envy, but a noble emulation. This, however, is not the feeling by which the envious are actuated. They desire less the possession of those estimable qualities, than to see others deprived of them ; they regard the prosperity of the neighbor as an injury to themselves ; their success, as a personal misfortune ; their good reputation, as a stain which tarnishes their own. This unhappy disposition of heart is a gnawing worm ; it is a passion which consumes in secret, and which makes the envious man, his own executioner. How mean and hateful is this vice ! How deplorable its effects !

The envious man rejoices at the misfortune of his neighbor. Should his neighbor incur disgrace, he is glad, he triumphs in his fall, and experiences a fiendish pleasure at witnessing his humiliation, although he may never have been injured by him.

The vindictive man attacks only his enemies—those from whom he has received, or from whom he believes he has received, some injury ; but the envious man hates those with whom he has nothing to reproach but the virtues by which they are distinguished.

The second effect of envy is defamation and calumny. The envious man endeavors to blacken the reputation of those by whose merits he is wounded ; he weakens, as much as in his power, the good that is said of them ; he gives malicious interpretations to some of their best actions ; he converts into vices the purest virtues. Their viciety is

in his eyes, but dissimulation and hypocrisy; and their success in their undertakings, the effect of chance, not the fruit of superior ability.

The third effect of this vice is, that it leads to the injury of our neighbor. From words, the envious man proceeds to acts; he frustrates the designs of the objects of his malignant passion; he employs all the means in his power to defeat their projects, to prevent them from obtaining what they desire, or to deprive them of what they have already obtained.

In fine, envy leads to the greatest excesses, and most criminal violence. It was envy that caused Cain to kill his brother; it was envy that prompted the brothers of Joseph with the design of putting him to death, and that made them sell him as a slave; it was envy that impelled the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law to calumniate, persecute, and crucify the Son of God himself. We should, then, never give this detestable vice an entrance into our heart; and should endeavor to acquire the opposite virtue; namely,—a truly Christian love, which will render us sensible to the happiness and misery of our fellow-creatures, for the love of God, and with a view to their salvation.

This love is the virtue of charity. He who is animated with it, participates in the good or evil which falls to the lot of his neighbor, and feels the one or the other as sensibly as if he himself experienced it. Follow the counsel of the Apostle, who says: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."*

Two neighboring shopkeepers had, through envy or jealousy, for a long time, entertained the most violent enmity towards each other. One of them, however, listening to the dictates of religion, became sensible of his criminality, and determined on seeking a reconciliation. He consulted a pious and enlightened friend, as to the course he should pursue. "My advice to you," replied the friend, "is, that, as your hatred arose from envy, when any one

* *Romans*, xii. 15.

comes to you to purchase goods, and that you cannot please him or deal with him, advise him to go to the house of your neighbor, and that he will, most likely, be accommodated." He followed the advice, and his neighbor, seeing such a number of persons come directly from the house of one whom he had considered his enemy, inquired the cause. On discovering it, he began to entertain quite different sentiments towards him, and, in a short time, they had the happiness of being perfectly reconciled.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is envy? — 2. What is the first effect of envy? — 3. What is the second? — 4. What is the third? — 5. What must be done to uproot this detestable vice?

SECTION VII.

Of Sloth.

Sloth is a voluntary disgust for labor, which causes us to neglect our duties, rather than do violence to nature. There are no disorders whatever to which sloth is not calculated to lead. It begets a kind of weakness and sluggishness of soul, which prevents us from resisting our evil inclinations, and, therefore, it is truly called the parent of every vice. Those evils which come directly from it are: first, *idleness* and *loss of time*. The slothful man passes his days, months, and years, either in doing nothing, or in frivolous amusements; he fulfils not his religious obligations; prayer is either entirely omitted, or said with distraction; the sacraments are not approached, or are received with undue dispositions. He also neglects the duties of his station in life. A young man, for example, does not profit of the education which is afforded him, he performs nothing of what is prescribed him, or performs it badly and without the least attention or application; his understanding remains uncultivated; his memory, unexercised; he leaves school almost as ignorant as when he first entered it.

What follows? If he obtains an important employment, which requires a clear understanding and extensive knowledge, he is incapable of discharging its duties; his ignorance is perceived; his incapacity is spoken of; he becomes the object of contempt and ridicule. What regrets must he not then feel, at having squandered the precious time of youth! Useless regrets, which come too late; the loss is irreparable.

The second vice, which springs from sloth, is *pusillanimity*. The slothful man has neither strength nor energy to undertake the most trifling business; he is arrested by the least obstacle; everything appears impossible, because he does not wish to exert himself. *Inconstancy* is another effect of sloth. If the slothful has any desire of correcting himself, it is weak and of short duration; he soon grows weary of doing well, and relapses into his habitual indolence. "Desires kill the slothful,"* says the Scripture. "The sluggard," it adds, "willeth and willeth not."† He wishes one thing to-day and another to-morrow; to-day he desires to do well, to-morrow his disposition is altered. Thence proceed a lukewarmness visible in his whole conduct, a languor of heart which leaves no relish for the discharge of duty, and an insensibility which renders him deaf to remonstrance: nothing moves, nothing affects him. Neither the reproaches which he receives, nor the good examples which he witnesses, are capable of arousing him from his slumber. The Holy Scripture compares the soul of the sluggard to an uncultivated waste:—"I passed by the field of the slothful man, . . . and behold, it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down."‡ Hear also the words of God, addressed to the slothful man, in the book of Proverbs:—"Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom; which, although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When

* Prov., xxi, 25.

† Prov., xiii, 4.

‡ Prov., xxiv, 30, 31

wilt thou rise out of thy sleep? Thou wilt sleep a little, thou wilt slumber a little, thou wilt fold thy hands a little to sleep; and want shall come upon thee as a traveller, and poverty as a man armed.”*

Laziness resembles stagnant water: this produces mud and unclean reptiles; that engenders indigence and the most detestable vices. He that is laborious resembles the bee: this little insect never beomes fatigued and extracts honey from all kinds of flowers.

Beg of God the virtue contrary to sloth; that is, a holy activity, or fervor, which will make you love your duties, and fulfil them properly, through a desire of pleasing God, and of securing your salvation. Let not the difficulties of labor cast you down; be of good courage, and God will render easy, and even delightful, what, at first, appears painful and repulsive. Our Creator, who imposes upon all the obligation of laboring, will enable us, by his holy grace, to practise what He commands. Be assured that the lassitude and weariness, which the vice of idleness produces, are a thousand times more insupportable than the most fatiguing labors.

While dangerously ill, the young duke of Burgundy sighed after the happy moment in which he would be permitted to renew his studies. One day, feeling somewhat recovered, he earnestly besought his tutor to restore him his books; and when the latter asked the reason of this eagerness, he replied: “Ah! my kind preceptor, I am afraid of losing what you have taught me, and because I have a thousand things yet to learn.” This answer shows us that the studious pupil of Fenelon, though scarcely nine years old, had his youthful mind already adorned with pleasing and useful knowledge.—MENTOR DES ENFANTS.

A good pastor frequently called the attention of his flock to the example of the ant, whose industry has become a proverb. “Learn to be wise,” he would say; “this life is the time of harvest: make provision of good works,

* Prov., vi, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

that you may have wherewith to purchase Heaven." *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?*

A servant of God was accustomed, every time he heard the clock strike, to say: "O my God! another hour is passed of those which are destined to make up the number of my days. Soon shall I have to render Thee an account of each one of them—yea, of every moment of my whole life!"

"In my youth," says Buffon, "I was extremely fond of sleep, which robbed me of the best portion of the morning. Desirous to overcome this habit, I promised my servant half a dollar each time he would cause me to rise before six o'clock. Next morning, at the appointed hour, Joseph (this was the servant's name) entered my bedroom and awoke me; but instead of rising, I upbraided the boy contumeliously. The following day he returned and had recourse to compulsory means to make me rise. This he continued for several weeks, as the half-dollar that he daily received seemed to be an ample recompense for my frequent bursts of indignation. One morning, however, I peremptorily refused to rise. At his wit's end to devise means to dissuade me from my determination, the courageous fellow, with the quickness of thought, seized a pitcher of cold water that stood hard by and, turning down the bedclothes, emptied it on my bosom and then took to flight. You may easily imagine that I did not hesitate long in changing my determination. At a stroke of my bell, the poor youngster returned, trembling with fear. 'Here, my boy, here are your fifty cents,' said I with the greatest calmness. Thus do I owe to poor Joseph, three or four volumes of my *Natural History*."

EXERCISES. — 1 What is sloth, and of what evils is it the source? — 2. What are the effects of this vice in a young man who has become its slave? — 3 What sad results follow this negligence? — 4. Cite some passages from Scripture which show the danger of sloth. — 5. What must be done to overcome this vice?

BOOK SECOND.

OF THE SACRAMENTS AND OF PRAYER.

PART FIRST.

OF THE SACRAMENTS.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION

Of the Necessity of Grace, and the Means of obtaining it.

In order to observe the Commandments of God and to save our soul, we stand in need of the assistance of grace, without which we can do nothing in the order of salvation. "Without me," says Christ, "you can do nothing;"* and St. Paul assures us that we are not "sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God."†

Grace is a supernatural gift, which God, in his boundless mercy, has given us through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is principally divided into two kinds; namely, *sanctifying* grace, and *actual* grace. *Sanctifying* grace is that grace which justifies us; that is, makes us pass from the state of mortal sin to that of sanctity, or justice. This grace makes us children of God, renders us agreeable in his sight, and gives us a right to the inheritance of Heaven. It is also called *habitual* grace, because it remains with us so long as we keep from consenting to mortal sin. *Actual*

* John, xv, 5.

† 2 Cor., iii, 5.

grace consists in a holy thought that enlightens the mind, and in a pious motion which goes before, excites, and helps our will to avoid evil and do good.

Original sin having darkened our understanding and depraved our heart, we are born in ignorance, and with a strong propensity to evil. These are the two general sources of all our sins. We sin because we are ignorant of our duties, or because, though we know them, we prefer to follow our inclinations rather than discharge those duties.

We could never recover from the state of sin, nor do the least good whatever, if God did not enlighten our mind, and give to our heart an inclination to virtue. Grace makes us know what is good, and inspires us with the desire, as well as gives the strength, to practise it. What would become of man attacked on all sides, within and without, if God did not assist his weakness ; for, combined with his own strong inclination to evil, he is subject to the temptations with which the devil and the world continually assail him. On every side, the world lays snares for our destruction. It exhibits before our eyes its pomps and deceitful pleasures, in order to attach our heart to them, and turn it away from God. The devil, too, continually attacks us, presenting to our senses flattering and seducing objects, amusing our imagination, with a thousand illusions, and exciting us to continual revolts of the flesh against the spirit. Man could not resist so many assaults, if God ceased for an instant to support him. This is the reason why, in our daily recital of the Lord's prayer, we beg of God that his name may be glorified ; that his will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven ; that He abandon us not in our temptations ; and that He deliver us from evil.

It is, then, true, according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, that we can neither give glory to God, do his will, resist temptation, nor be delivered from the snares of the devil, but by the assistance of grace. With his grace, however, we can do everything : "I can do all things, says the Apostle, in Him who strengtheneth me."* This help is not due to us, we have no right whatever to it ; if we had,

* Philippians, iv, 13,

it would be no longer a grace. We receive it from the unspeakable goodness of God, and through the infinite merits of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This grace is never refused to any one, and it is our own fault, if we do not avail ourselves of it, and save our soul. It is not grace which is wanting to us; it is we that are wanting to grace. God has attached grace to the sacraments, when they are received with proper dispositions; and He has promised it to prayer, when it is well made. We have, then, two infallible means of obtaining the grace of God,—prayer and the sacraments.

We receive sanctifying grace by means of the sacraments of Baptism and Penance, which Jesus Christ has instituted for this end, and which, by this institution, have become necessary means of sanctification. In the second place, God has promised to hear us when we pray to Him, implore the assistance of his grace, or solicit his mercy, in the name of his only Son, who has loved us, and delivered himself to death for us. By prayer we can obtain the grace of God, and with this powerful help we can keep his commandments; “for God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding us (to do anything). He admonishes us to do what we can, to pray for the help we need, and then He gives the assistance necessary to make us able. God never forsakes those that are justified by his grace, unless He be first forsaken by them;” He never ceases to protect us so long as we continue faithful to Him.

St. Augustine had long resisted the grace of God which urged him to repentance. But, at length, hearing of the wonderful conversion of two officers of the emperor's court, which had been effected by reading the life of St. Anthony, he began to be grieved and ashamed to find his will had been so weak and divided. Withdrawing into his garden, and throwing himself down under a fig tree, he gave free vent to a torrent of tears, and addressing himself to God, said, “How long, O Lord!—Wilt Thou be angry for ever?” Weeping with the most bitter contrition of heart, he, on a sudden, heard, as it were, the voice of a child, which fre-

quently repeated these words: "Take up, and read; take up, and read." Then taking up a copy of St. Paul's Epistles, he read a passage strongly exhorting to repentance, and to the practice of a virtuous life. He hesitated no longer, but instantly resolved to co-operate with grace; and he soon happily experienced the truth of what one of the officers had said, that "it costs much less to become the friend of God, than to arrive at a brilliant fortune, and to win the emperor's friendship and favor." It is necessary only to will it sincerely, when behold, I become, in a moment, the friend and favorite of God.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. —1. Of what do we stand in need to keep the commandments and to save our soul? — 2. What is grace, and how is it divided? — 3. What is *sanctifying* grace? — 4. What is *actual* grace? — 5. Show that grace is necessary to enable us to recover from the state of sin. — 6. From whom do we receive this grace? — 7. In what sacraments do we receive sanctifying grace?

CHAPTER I.

OF THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

The sacraments are sensible signs, instituted by Jesus Christ, to confer grace. Hence, they are so many sacred channels, through which he communicates to us the graces which lead to salvation. They are called *signs*, because they indicate to us the graces which we receive in them; and they are *sensible*, because they fall under the cognizance of the senses. There are seven sacraments; Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. In these sacraments there are two things to be considered, one of which we see; the other, we do not see, but believe. That which we see, is the exterior action of the minister of the sacrament; that which we do not see, is the invisible operation of grace.

Three things are necessary to make a true sacrament: first, that there be some outward sensible action performed; second, that this be a certain means to bring grace to the soul; and, third, that Jesus Christ be the author of it.

The outward sign consists of matter and form. That which is used, or the thing done in the administration of the sacraments, is called the *matter*; the words spoken, the *form*; and these two exterior things, the matter and form, have a correspondence with each other, as well as with the graces they communicate. In Baptism, for example, the matter is water; the form consists of these words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The words, *I baptize*, signify *I wash*; and the effect of Baptism is to purify the soul by giving it a new life, the life of grace. The matter of Confirmation consists in the imposition of hands, when the Bishop prays that the Holy Ghost may fill the soul with his strength and grace, and in the anointing with holy chrism; and the form consists in the words which accompany the latter action. The effect of Confirmation is to strengthen and cause the soul to increase in spiritual life. In the same manner, the Holy Eucharist, the matter of which is bread and wine, nourishes spiritually; Penance heals the maladies of the soul; Extreme Unction delivers us from the remains of the weakness caused by sin; Holy Orders furnish the Church with ministers to govern it; and Matrimony gives it children to renew it, as it were, and to perpetuate its duration.

All the sacraments have been instituted for our sanctification, and all produce this effect; but there are differences, between them, which it is necessary to remark. Baptism and Penance have been established to confer the spiritual life of grace, and for this reason, they are called *sacraments of the dead*; the other sacraments have been instituted for the augmentation of sanctifying grace, and to preserve this spiritual life, when it has already been obtained, and for this reason, they are called *sacraments of the living*, because, to receive them worthily, we must be living the life of grace, that is to say, exempt from mortal sin. That particular actual grace peculiar to each sacrament which gives the soul a special aid to obtain the end for which each sacrament was instituted, is called *sacramental grace*.

Three of the sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, have a special effect, which is, to impress on the soul a spiritual, indelible character, which consecrates to God, in a particular manner, the persons who receive them. A person receiving any of these three sacraments with undue dispositions, would not receive sanctifying grace, though he would receive the character. Grace, after having been received, may be lost by sin, but the divine seal which these sacraments have impressed, cannot be effaced; and for this reason, they cannot be received more than once.

Besides the outward action, and the words, which are essential to each sacrament, the Church, always guided by the spirit of God, has added many ceremonies for the instruction and edification of the faithful. Although these ceremonies are not absolutely necessary for the effect of the sacraments, they are respectable for their antiquity: the greater number of them appear to have been established by the Apostles themselves; they all serve to make known to us the excellence and holiness of the sacraments; and they teach us, in a sensible manner, the dispositions with which they ought to be received, the effects they produce, and the obligations they impose.

A certain zealous clergyman, addressing his congregation, said: "How many sick persons repair, in the summer season, to famous watering-places, at great expense, in order to obtain the cure of some corporal infirmity! and how many spiritually sick amongst us, who do not avail themselves of those admirable waters flowing through the sacraments out 'of the Savior's fountains,'* for the cure of all the maladies of the soul!"

EXERCISES.—1. What are sacraments? — 2. How many sacraments are there? — 3. How many things are requisite to make a sacrament? 4. Why have the sacraments been instituted? — 5. Which are the sacraments that can be received but once, and why so?

* Isaiah, xii, 3

CHAPTER II.

OF BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

Of the Necessity of Receiving this Sacrament.

Baptism is a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, and makes us children of God and of his Church. It is the first of the sacraments, and entitles us to receive the others. Our Lord instituted it when he said to his Apostles: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."*

It is, then, for the salvation of men, that Jesus Christ has instituted Baptism; it is to deliver them from sin, and to render them, by this new birth, children of God and of his Church.

Baptism remits original sin in children not yet arrived at the use of reason; and in adults, it not only remits original sin, but also all the actual sins committed before it, provided the persons receiving it have the necessary dispositions. Baptism also remits the temporal punishment due to sin; for which reason, the Church never imposes penance on the newly-baptized; but this sacrament does not take away the consequences of original sin, such as ignorance, inclination to evil, the miseries of this life, and the necessity of temporal death. The effects of original sin still remain, after the sin itself has been remitted, to serve as an exercise of our virtue, by the combat we have to sustain in resisting evil, and in doing good. If Baptism delivered us from ignorance and inclination to evil, we would do good without effort, and, as it were naturally; and then we should have no other merit, than that of corresponding with grace, since the practice of good would cost us nothing. This sacrament impresses upon the soul a spiritual

* Matt., xxviii, 19, and Mark, xvi, 16.

mark, or character, which can **never** be effaced ; and which **consecrates** to God those who are baptized, and distinguishes them from those who are not. This character of consecration is such, that the sacrament cannot be reiterated ; for that which is once consecrated to God, belongs to Him by an inalienable right.

Baptism is so necessary, that we cannot be saved without it, conformably to the words of Jesus Christ : " Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; " * but it may be supplied by martyrdom, or by desire. Hence, we distinguish three kinds of Baptism ; the *baptism of water*, the *baptism of desire*, and the *baptism of blood*. *Baptism of water* can alone be truly called the sacrament. If the two others receive the name of Baptism, it is only because they supply the want of the sacrament when it cannot be received ; but they do not impress the character. *Baptism of desire*, so called because produced by an impulse of the Holy Ghost, is a perfect conversion to God by contrition or love of God above all things, with an explicit or implicit wish of true Baptism of water, whose place it supplies according to the Council of Trent : and our holy faith teaches us that in receiving it by desire, men are saved. *Baptism of blood* consists in suffering martyrdom for the love of God, and for the faith of Jesus Christ, without having been baptized. It is thus named, because the person who dies in defence of the faith is considered as baptized in his own blood, and as obtaining the same grace as if he had received t Baptism of water. It does not operate as a sacrament from a certain privilege, on account of its resemblance the passion of Christ. Thus martyrdom availed the h innocents, whom the Church honors as true martyrs.

" I have known a virtuous woman," says the pious Boud " poor indeed as to the goods of this world, but very rich as to those of Heaven ; full of the spirit of Jesus Christ, and affectionately devoted to the Blessed Virgin. In the town in which she lived, a magnificent church was being

* John, iii, 5.

erected, and she felt strongly impelled to offer a crown which she had saved out of her hard earnings, that she might have the gratification of contributing to the construction of the sacred edifice. The Priest to whom she presented her offering, refused to accept it, and told her that he would be better pleased to give her some assistance, than to take anything from her, judging, from her appearance, that she must be wretchedly poor. But she, with admirable faith, replied: "Poor! do you say, reverend Father? Ah! am I not a Christian, the daughter of a great King, and heiress to an everlasting kingdom?"

EXERCISES. — 1. Which is the first and most necessary of the sacraments? — 2. What sins does Baptism remit? — 3. What words of our divine Lord show the necessity of Baptism? — 4. How may it be supplied? — 5. What do you mean by *baptism of desire*? — 6. In what does *baptism of blood* consist?

SECTION II.

Of the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism.

Since Baptism is so necessary for salvation, Jesus Christ, in instituting it, has given to men all imaginable facilities for receiving it. Although the Priests of the Church are the ordinary ministers of this sacrament, yet, in cases of necessity, any lay person can administer it; and this Baptism is valid, provided that the person has the intention of doing what the Church does, and pours natural water on the head of the person to be baptized, pronouncing, *at the same time*, the following words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." When it is impossible to pour the water on the head, it should be poured on the breast or shoulders, or on any other part of the body. In case of reasonable doubt, whether Baptism previously conferred has been valid, or whether it has been, at all, conferred, conditional Baptism should be given, thus: "If thou art not baptized, I baptize thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Again, when it is doubtful, whether the person to be baptized has life, conditional Baptism

should also be given, thus : " If thou art capable of being baptized, I baptize thee, in the name of the Father," &c., &c.

Baptism being absolutely necessary for all men, it is of obligation on those who are converted to the faith, and who have come to the use of reason, to receive this sacrament ; but the practice of the Church in their regard is very different from that which she observes in regard to infants. As infants are incapable of instruction, they are admitted to Baptism without any disposition, because they cannot have any ; but with regard to those who have come to the use of reason, the case is different. They are first taught the holy mysteries, and all that they are obliged to know of religion ; they are exhorted to present themselves with pure intentions, and with their heart disengaged from all affection to sin ; and they are excited to do penance for those they have committed. The sacrament was formerly administered to this class of persons but twice in the year, on the eves of Easter and Pentecost, unless there was danger of death ; and it was always on these days that the water used in Baptism was blessed.

A Missionary, who had penetrated into some of the most remote regions of America, to gain souls to Christ, was addressed by a poor Indian, whose dispositions appeared extraordinary. Having instructed him in the truths of religion, and on the dispositions necessary for receiving the sacraments, he administered to him the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist, which he received with the most lively transports of love and gratitude. The Missionary departed to visit other parts of the country, and returned in about a year to the place where this poor man resided. Immediately on his arrival, the poor savage, who regarded him as a father, came to visit him, and begged him to administer to him the Holy Communion. " Yes, my child," said the Missionary, " but you must first confess any mortal sins of which you have been guilty since my departure. Fear not ; I will assist you in your accusation." " What ! Father," replied the Indian, " is it possible that any Christian, after being baptized, and receiving the

Blessed Eucharist, could be guilty of offending God by mortal sin? Thanks be to God, I believe I am not guilty of any such sins." He then, with tears and lively sentiments of sorrow, accused himself of some very trifling transgressions. The Missionary blessed God at seeing that He was served and glorified by faithful and fervent souls, even among the most savage people.—LETTRES EDIFIANTES.

EXERCISES. — 1. By whom may the sacrament of Baptism be administered? — 2. What is the form of this sacrament? — 3. What form is used when there is reason to doubt the validity of Baptism previously conferred? — 4. What practice does the Church observe respecting the Baptism of persons who embrace our holy faith?

SECTION III.

Of the Ceremonies of Baptism.

As Baptism is the first and most necessary of all the sacraments, the Church desires that its administration be accompanied with appropriate ceremonies, expressive of the excellence of the sacrament itself, and of the obligations contracted by those who receive it.

The person to be baptized remains, at first, at the entrance of the Church, to intimate that, being the slave of the devil, he has no right to enter into the house of God, on account of original sin, with which he is sullied. The Priest, after asking what he demands of the Church, proceeds to prepare him for Baptism. He first breathes on him, and commands the unclean spirit to depart, and give place to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. After this, he makes the sign of the cross on his forehead and breast, to signify, that a Christian must make open profession of the faith of a crucified God, and always bear Christ crucified in his heart. This sacred sign is frequently used in the administration of this sacrament, to show that it derives all its efficacy from the cross of Jesus Christ, and that the life of a Christian is a life of suffering, after the example of that divine Master, in whose footsteps he is to follow.

Having said some prayers for the person to be baptized, the Priest puts a little blessed salt into his mouth, to sig-

nify, that by Baptism, he receives grace to preserve his soul from the corruption of sin. By this ancient ceremony, we are admonished to procure and to maintain in our soul true wisdom and prudence, of which salt is an emblem. The Priest next proceeds to the solemn prayers and exorcisms, and after the last exorcism, touches the ears and nostrils of the infant or catechumen, to show that by Baptism, his ears are opened to the word of God, and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his nostrils to the good odor of all Christian virtues. Then follows the solemn renunciation of Satan, and of his works and pomps ; after which, the breast and shoulders are anointed with holy oil. The anointing of the breast is to signify the necessity of fortifying the heart with heavenly courage ; and the anointing of the shoulders, the necessity of the like grace to bear the crosses and adversities of this life. The holy oil is emblematic of the interior unction of grace, which the Holy Ghost imparts to the soul ; and as oil penetrates the body, strengthens it, and heals its wounds, so the graces received in Baptism, penetrate the heart, and fortify it against the passions.

The person to be baptized is now interrogated by the Priest concerning his faith in the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation and Redemption. He is then asked if he wishes to be baptized, and the godfather and godmother having answered that he does, the Priest administers the sacrament. The child's name ought to be that of some saint, whom he may have for an intercessor in Heaven, and for a model of the life which he should lead on earth. After Baptism, the Priest anoints the new Christian on the crown of the head, with holy chrism, to signify that he is made a partaker of the royal dignity of Christ ; and he puts on his head a white linen cloth, and in his hand a lighted candle, to represent the purity which he has just received, and to teach him that he is always to walk in the light of faith, and to be animated with the fire of charity. He then enters his name on the registry of the Church, to show that he has been admitted among the children of God.

Those who answer for an infant at Baptism, are named godfathers and godmothers ; they promise for him to God, that he will faithfully acquit himself of the obligations which he contracts at Baptism ; and they engage to see him instructed in his Christian duties, and to use their efforts that he may faithfully practise them. Should the parents of the child, or those whose incumbent duty it is to instruct him in his religious obligations, neglect that duty, the godfather and godmother are strictly bound to supply their place.

The Emperor Dioclesian, coming to Rome, was received with great rejoicings. Among other entertainments prepared for him, those of the stage were not neglected. In a comedy, which was acted in his presence, one of the players conceived the idea of representing, in a ludicrous manner, the ceremonies of the Christian Baptism, which could not fail to divert the assembly, who held the Catholic religion and its mysteries in contempt. A player, named Genesisius, who had learned some things concerning the Christian rites, laid himself down on the stage, feigning himself sick, and said, " Ah ! my friends, I find a great weight upon me, and would gladly have it removed." The other actors answered, " What shall we do to give thee ease ?" " I am resolved," said Genesisius, " to die a Christian, that God may receive me on this day of my death, as one who seeks his salvation, by flying from idolatry and superstition." The two comedians, one in the dress of a Priest, the other, of an exorcist, approached, and seating themselves at his bed-side, said, " My child, what do you demand ?" At this interrogatory, Genesisius, by a divine inspiration, was suddenly converted, and, with great earnestness and unfeigned sincerity, replied, " The grace of Jesus Christ, and to be born again, that I may be delivered from all my sins." The ceremonies of Baptism were then, in mockery, proceeded with, and on being baptized, he was clothed with a white garment. To carry on the jest, other players, dressed like soldiers, seized Genesisius, and presented him to the emperor to be examined like the martyrs. Then

Genesius, standing upon the stage, said aloud, in a tone and manner that seemed to bespeak inspiration :—"Hear, O emperor, and you that are here present, officers, senators, philosophers, and people, what I am going to say. I never yet so much as heard the name of *Christian*, but I was struck with horror, and I abhorred my very relations, because they professed the Christian religion. I learned its rites and mysteries, that I might the more heartily despise it, and inspire you with the utmost contempt of it, by making them the subject of public derision. But whilst I was washed with the water, and interrogated, I had no sooner answered sincerely that I believed, than I saw a hand extended from Heaven, and beheld angels of transcendent brightness hovering over me, who recited, out of a book, all the sins I had committed from my childhood. This book they plunged into the water, and when they afterwards presented it to me, it was whiter than the falling snow. Wherefore, I counsel you, O great and potent emperor, and all ye people, who here have ridiculed these mysteries, to believe with me, that Jesus Christ is the true Lord ; that he is the light and the truth ; and that it is through him you may obtain the forgiveness of your sins."

The emperor, equally astonished and enraged, ordered Genesius to be most cruelly beaten with clubs, and afterwards to be handed over to the prefect of the city, that he might compel him to offer sacrifice to the gods. The prefect commanded him to be put upon the rack, where he was torn with iron hooks for a considerable time, and then burned with torches. The martyr endured these torments with constancy, and in reply to the inhuman judge, said : "The God whom I adore and serve is the only Lord of the universe ; to Him I will adhere, though I should suffer death a thousand times for his sake. And no torments shall remove Jesus Christ from my heart or mouth. What grieves me is, that I have so lately come to his service, and have so greatly offended Him by my former errors and impieties." Perceiving that his eloquence made a deep impression on the multitude, the prefect, without further delay, ordered his head to be struck off. Thus, our Lord,

who called a publican to the apostleship, honored with the glory of martyrdom, this saint, drawn from the stage—the most infamous school of vice and the passions. The Baptism which St. Genesius received on the stage, was no more than a representation of the sacrament, for want of a serious intention of performing the Christian rite; but he was baptized in desire, with true contrition, and, also, in his own blood.

EXERCISES.—1. Recount, in a few words, the principal ceremonies of Baptism. — 2. What names are given to those who answer for a child at Baptism? — 3. What obligations do godfathers and godmothers contract?

SECTION IV.

Of the Promises made at Baptism.

When presented to the Church to receive Baptism, we are asked whether we will live according to the Gospel maxims, and renounce, in heart and affection, the devil and his pomps, the world and its maxims; nor are we admitted among the number of God's children, until we have made a formal promise in the affirmative.

It is, then, in the face of Heaven and earth, in presence of God and his angels, that we promise to submit to the law of Jesus Christ, and to observe it in its full extent. We had not, it is true, the use of reason, when we received the sacrament, but it was for us, and in our name, that these promises were made; and we have ratified them since, every time that we have made public profession of Christianity. We ratify them still every day, by the sign of the cross; by the recital of the Lord's Prayer; by assisting at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and by receiving the sacraments. We belong, then, no longer to ourselves; we belong, exclusively to God; our souls, our bodies—all are his. To follow the maxims of the world, to seek after its vanities, to love the pomps of the devil, to blush at the Gospel, would be to renounce the character of a Christian, to violate one's engagements, to become a prevaricator, to trample on the blood of Jesus Christ, to

outrage the Holy Spirit, and to banish Him shamefully from our heart. We should never forget that these promises are written in the book of life ; that they are registered in Heaven ; and that they will become the subject of that judgment which we must undergo after death. Our salvation, our eternal destiny, depends on our fidelity to them. We should frequently renew them, and unceasingly thank God that we, who were slaves of Satan, have become his own adopted children, and heirs to his heavenly kingdom.

It is related in Ecclesiastical History, that Maurita, a holy deacon of Carthage, having baptized a young man named Elpidophorus, had the affliction to see him afterwards become an apostate, and even a persecutor of the Christians. Whilst the impious man, who had been raised to the dignity of judge, sat one day in judgment upon them, Maurita made his appearance, carrying in his hand the white garment with which he had clothed Elpidophorus in Baptism. Raising it up before him, he said, in the hearing of the whole assembly : " Behold, O minister of error, this white garment, which I have carefully preserved ; it will be thy accuser and the witness of thy apostacy on the last day, before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. When thou camest from Baptism, washed and purified from thy sins, it served thee as an ornament ; but hereafter it shall be to thee a garment of fire and flame, to torment thee for all eternity !" When Maurita had concluded, the most of the assembly were in tears, and Elpidophorus himself, leaving his tribunal, retired in confusion.

EXERCISES. — 1. What are the promises of Baptism ? — 2. Are we obliged to observe them, although they were made in our name before we had the use of reason ? — 3. How and when do we ratify these promises ? — 4. Why should we frequently renew these promises ?

CHAPTER III.

OF CONFIRMATION.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature and Effects of Confirmation.

Confirmation, which is the second of the sacraments, increases in us the grace of Baptism, and renders us perfect Christians, by imparting to us the Holy Ghost, with the abundance of his graces. This sacrament completes what Baptism began. The grace of Baptism is a grace of regeneration, which makes us children of God ; that of Confirmation is a grace of fortitude and courage, which elevates us to the condition of perfect men, and renders us capable of giving testimony to Jesus Christ, at the expense even of our very life. This is what was seen in the persons of the Apostles. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were weak and timid ; but, as soon as they were filled with his graces, they became new men, and announced Jesus Christ with fortitude and zeal. The Holy Ghost descends on those also who are confirmed, and produces in them the same effects, but in an invisible manner ; because religion is now so established, that to practise it, we need not the assistance of miracles.

Although the Holy Ghost does not descend visibly on those who receive Confirmation, as it frequently happened in the primitive Church, yet He always sheds upon those who are duly disposed, the abundance of his gifts and fruits. The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are : *wisdom*, which detaches us from the things of this world, and gives us a relish for the things of God ; *understanding*, which makes us penetrate the truths of religion ; *counsel*, which makes known to us the way of salvation, and the enemies we have to contend with therein ; *fortitude*, which enables us to surmount every obstacle that may oppose our spiritual progress ; *knowledge*, by which we are made acquainted with our duties towards God ; *piety*, which enables us to discharge those duties ; and the *fear of the Lord*, which

impresses on our soul a great respect for the awful majesty of God, and a salutary dread of offending Him.

The fruits of the Holy Ghost are : *charity*, which unites us to God by love ; *joy*, which fills the soul with a holy consolation ; *peace*, which produces tranquillity in the midst of contradictions ; *patience*, which enables us to support, for the love of God, all the afflictions that befall us ; *longanimity*, which makes us expect, with confidence, the good things to come ; *goodness*, which renders us beneficent to all ; *benignity*, which begets sweetness and affability of manners ; *mildness*, which allays in us every motion of passion or anger ; *fidelity*, which makes us punctual observers of our covenants and promises ; *modesty*, which regulates our whole exterior according to the maxims of the Gospel ; *continence* and *chastity*, which preserve our body pure and holy, so as to be a suitable temple of the Holy Ghost, who resides in it.

The Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are the ordinary ministers of Confirmation.

The ceremonies which accompany its administration, are signs of the admirable effects which the sacrament produces. The Bishop, turning towards those who are to be confirmed, holds his hands extended over them, to show that the Holy Ghost takes them under his protection, and is about to replenish them with his graces. He prays, at the same time, that the Holy Spirit may descend upon all present who are to be confirmed ; and then anoints each person's forehead with holy chrism in the form of a cross, saying: "I SIGN THEE WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, I CONFIRM THEE WITH THE CHRISM OF SALVATION, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST." These words are the form of the sacrament.

The holy chrism, which is composed of oil of olives and balm, expresses the abundance, sweetness, and power, of the grace, which fills, penetrates, and strengthens the soul, as oil penetrates and strengthens the body. The balm is also a symbol of the good odor of Christ, which the confirmed Christian ought, by the practice of all virtues, diffuse every where around him. Confirmation is one of the three sacra-

ments which confer a spiritual character ; it can, therefore, be received but once.

Although this sacrament is not absolutely necessary for salvation, yet it would be a sin to neglect to receive it ; because such neglect would deprive us of the abundant graces which it communicates ; and would be a disobedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has instituted it for our advancement in the life of grace.

Julian the Apostate, resolving to make solemn profession of his impiety, ordered preparations to be made for a sacrifice to the idols, in one of the pagan temples. On the day appointed, he repaired thither, accompanied by his court, in great pomp, that the sacrifice might be celebrated with all possible magnificence. All being ready, he made a sign to the priests to commence the impious rite ; but, what was their astonishment, when they found themselves unable to proceed with it ! Their knives, which they had well prepared, could make no impression on the flesh of the victims, and the fire which they had lighted on the altar was suddenly extinguished. The sacrificing priest said, "There is some unknown power present that interrupts our ceremonies." Then addressing the emperor,— "There must be," he observed, "some one present who has been baptized or confirmed." Julian ordered that inquiry should be made, when behold ! a boy, one of his own pages, came forward, and said :—"Know, sire, that I am a Christian, and have been confirmed. A few days since I was anointed with holy oil, to strengthen me for the combat. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, who, by his cross, has redeemed me. I acknowledge him alone for my God, and I glory in belonging to him. It was I, or rather it was the God whom I serve, who prevented the impiety you were going to commit. I invoked the sacred name of Jesus Christ, and the demons could not be acknowledged as gods. At that sacred name, the name of the true and only God, the devils have been put to flight !" The emperor, who had formerly professed Christianity, aware of the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. was seized with ter-

ror; and, apprehending the effects of the divine vengeance, left the temple, covered with confusion, without uttering a single word. The courageous young soldier of Christ immediately reported to the Christians all that had occurred. They rendered glory to God, and acknowledged how terrible to the devils are those in whom the virtue of Jesus Christ dwells by the sacrament of Confirmation, when it is received with proper dispositions.—PRUDENTIUS.

EXERCISES. — 1. What are the effects of Confirmation? — 2. What is the difference between this sacrament and Baptism? — 3. Does the Holy Ghost descend visibly on those who are being confirmed? — 4. Name and define the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. — 5. Name the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, and tell us their effects. — 6. Who are the ministers of Confirmation? — 7. How is this sacrament given? — 8. Is it sinful to neglect its reception?

SECTION II.

Of the Dispositions for Confirmation.

As Confirmation can be received **but once**, it is of great importance to receive it with the necessary dispositions, that we may not be deprived of the graces peculiar to this sacrament. The first disposition necessary for receiving it is, to be instructed in the principal mysteries of religion, and to renew our profession of them. We should also know the Apostles' Creed, and understand its meaning, and be instructed in what regards the commandments, the sacraments, grace, and prayer. If young children, incapable of such knowledge, are sometimes admitted to this sacrament, it is a pure indulgence in favor of their age and innocence. When a person receives a sacrament he cannot be too well instructed; and he exposes himself to great danger when, through his own fault, he has not sufficient knowledge.

The second disposition is, to have a conscience free from mortal sin. This disposition is still more necessary than the former, and nothing can dispense with it. The Holy Ghost himself assures us, in the Holy Scripture, that "wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell

in a body subject to sin.”* The sacrament of Confirmation is a sacrament of the living; it requires, then, spiritual life in him who receives it. The effect of this sacrament is to increase and strengthen this spiritual life in the soul; but it is impossible to strengthen in the life of grace, the soul that does not possess it. To receive Confirmation worthily, we must either have preserved the life of grace received in Baptism, or we must have recovered it by true repentance.

The third disposition is, an ardent desire to receive the Holy Ghost, with the abundance of his graces. It was by holy desires and fervent prayers, that the Apostles prepared themselves for his coming; and it is by imitating their example that we shall attract Him to us. We should beg this favor with earnestness and perseverance, and God, whose infinite goodness disposes Him to listen to our petitions, will not refuse to grant it.

The persecution raised in Jerusalem, after the death of St. Stephen, having dispersed the disciples, St. Philip, the Deacon, went to Samaria, and converted great numbers, whom he baptized. He imparted the joyful news to the Apostles, who immediately sent St. Peter and St. John to impose hands upon them, and no sooner had they done so, than the Holy Ghost visibly descended on the new converts. “They laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”†

EXERCISES. — 1. What is the first disposition necessary to receive worthily the sacrament of Confirmation? — 2. What is the second? — 3. What is the third?

SECTION III.

Of the Obligations of Confirmation.

Confirmation imposes on us two principal obligations: the first, to confess the faith of Jesus Christ at the peril of our life; and the second, never to blush at the Gospel.

* Wisdom, i, 4.

† Acts, viii, 17.

nor yield to human respect. A confirmed Christian is bound to defend the faith, when he hears infidels assail its dogmas, or libertines oppose its morality. He ought to give testimony of Jesus Christ, that is, defend courageously the faith which he has taught us ; and he ought to oppose, with earnestness and vigor, those who attack it, fearing neither raileries nor threats—no, nor even death itself. The terrible chastisement with which our Lord, in the Gospel, menaces those who neglect this duty, should make us sensible of its importance. “Every one, therefore, that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in Heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in Heaven.”* It is, then, a crime not to confess Jesus Christ before men, or not to declare for him when he is insulted. We should oppose, with a courage worthy a soldier of Jesus Christ, the dangerous discourses of corrupt men, who would weaken our faith. We should sustain the interests of our Master to the full extent of our ability. Would we suffer any person to slander, in our hearing, a parent or a dear friend ? How, then, can we endure any one to outrage, in our presence, that God to whom we owe our very existence, and who is to be our eternal recompense ? It is principally by the purity of our morals and the regularity of our conduct, that we must confess Jesus Christ, and gain to him the hearts of those who attack his doctrine. Example is more powerful and persuasive than words, and nothing honors or confirms our holy religion more than the Christian and virtuous lives of those who profess it.

The Bishop, in administering Confirmation, makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the person he confirms, and gives him a light stroke on the cheek, to teach him that he should never be ashamed to practise the law of Jesus Christ, and that he should elevate himself above human respect, and that weakness so unworthy a Christian, which would deter him from the practice of virtue, or cause him to commit evil, rather than give offence to the

* Matthew, x. 32, 33.

sinful and worldly-minded. A young man, for instance, will not frequent the sacraments, sanctify holidays, go to Mass, nor observe the abstinences of the Church, because he fears he may become the ridicule of companions who are neglectful of these duties. He sees that in fulfilling them, he will become the object of their raillery; and this is sufficient to determine him to act like them, and thus to adopt a line of conduct which must lead eventually to his everlasting destruction.

How injurious to God is such deplorable conduct! How lamentable in its consequences! What an outrage is thus offered to God, when we willingly sacrifice his friendship rather than that of men! Wicked men who merit neither our esteem nor our confidence; men whom, in our heart, we, perhaps, despise. What! God commands us to preserve piety in our heart, by the frequent use of the means which He has appointed for our sanctification; and because young libertines, persons blinded by their passions, would ridicule us, we therefore, either abandon the service of God, or are ashamed to be considered as his disciples. What infatuation! Do we fear more to incur disgrace with the impious, than to become the object of God's hatred and indignation? What a crime to give the preference to the creature rather than to the Creator! If God be for us, what have we to fear from the impious? If God be against us, what assistance can they render us? When we are about to perish, can they save us? When God condemns us, can they take upon them our defence? We blush, forsooth, at our fidelity in discharging our duties, though this, on the contrary, should constitute our glory. What an inconsistency! what an opposition to the light of reason, and to all the principles of natural equity! It is the vicious, not the virtuous, that ought to blush; for shame is attached to crime, not to innocence. But who are those censors of the virtuous, those men whom we so much desire to please, whose suffrages we seek to gain? They are men, the greater number of whom groan under the shameful yoke of their brutal passions; who are inwardly torn by cruel remorse, and tormented by the reproaches of con-

science, whose importunate voice they wish to stifle ; and they seek to multiply companions in their disorders, and thus encourage themselves by their numbers. Whilst outwardly they inveigh against piety, they cannot help respecting it in their heart, and feeling a regret for its loss. While they persecute the just, they privately esteem them and envy their happy state ; and, had they a treasure which they wished to be securely preserved, it is to the virtuous, and not to their vicious companions, they would confide its keeping.

An officer, illustrious both for his birth and fortune, was on the point of obtaining a very lucrative situation, when he was accused of being a Christian, that religion excluding him, by the laws, from all offices and dignities. The governor gave him four hours for consideration, and told him to weigh well what he was going to do. During the interval which had thus been given him, he was visited by the Bishop, who took him by the hand, led him to the church, and begged of him to enter the sanctuary. Here, at the foot of the altar, the Bishop pointed to the sword which the officer wore, and presenting him, at the same time, a copy of the Gospels, asked him which he would choose. The officer, without hesitation, with his right hand took hold of the sacred book. "Adhere, then, to God," said the holy Bishop ; "be faithful to Him ; He will fortify you and recompense your choice.—Depart in peace." The officer went from the church, and presenting himself before the governor, made a generous confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. Sentence of death was then pronounced upon him, and, by expiring for his faith in sharp but passing torments, he merited eternal and ineffable joys.—MERAULT.

EXERCISES. — 1. How many obligations does Confirmation impose ? — 2. What are the obligations of the confirmed Christian ? — 3. What do the sign of the cross on the forehead and the slight blow on the cheek signify ? — 4. Are those who censure the virtuous very honorable ?

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

SECTION I.

Of the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, and of Transubstantiation.

The Blessed Eucharist is the body and blood, soul and divinity, of Jesus Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine. It is the greatest and most august of all the sacraments. The other sacraments confer some particular graces ; but this bestows upon us the Author of grace, our Lord Jesus Christ himself. By it he abides in us, and we in him. Our Lord, long before he instituted this wonderful sacrament, had promised that he would give it, as we read in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel. After having said to the Jews, "I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven," he added : "The bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews murmured at what he had said, but he repeated it in still stronger terms : "Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."* This promise, so clearly given, he fulfilled on the eve of his passion, in the supper-room in which he eat the paschal lamb with his disciples. "And taking bread," says the Evangelist, "he gave thanks, and brake, and gave to them, saying : This is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying : This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you."†

The outward appearances of bread and wine are the sensible sign which represents the invisible effects which this holy sacrament produces. They signify that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are the spiritual nourishment of the

* John, vi, 51, 52, 54, 57. † Luke, xxii, 19, 20. See also, Matt., xxvi, 26, 27, 28.

soul, as bread and wine are the nourishment of the body. Although these outward appearances, the taste, color, and form, of bread and wine, remain the same after consecration as they were before, yet there is no longer either bread or wine ; the substance of the bread being changed into the body of Jesus Christ, and the substance of the wine into his blood : so that the same body which was nailed for us to the cross, and is now glorious in Heaven, is, at the same time, really present, under the appearance of bread, on our altars. As the body of our Lord is a living body, it follows that he is whole and entire under each species, and under each particle of the same species. Under the appearance of bread, the body of Jesus Christ is united to his blood, his soul, and his divinity ; and under the appearance of wine, his blood is united with his body, his soul, and divinity ; for now that Jesus Christ is glorious and immortal he cannot be divided ; his blood is not separable from his body ; where the one is, the other must necessarily be. We receive, then, our Lord Jesus Christ whole and entire, true God and true man, by communicating under either of the species, as we would, if we received under both.

This admirable change is effected by the omnipotent words of Jesus Christ, which the Priest pronounces in his name. Yes ; our Lord himself, who formely changed water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana, and who out of nothing, created all things, operates this wonder by the instrumentality of his Priests. It is as easy for him to change one substance into another, as it was in the beginning to create the universe by a single word. We cannot, indeed, understand how all these wonders are effected, but we know, that "no word shall be impossible with God ;" and we believe them on the word of Jesus Christ, who, for us, and for our sanctification, has been pleased to do more than we can comprehend. We believe, on the testimony of God himself, that He is really present in the holy sacrament of the altar ; that, to unite himself intimately with us, He has been pleased to become himself our food ; and that He nourishes our soul with the very blood which He

shed for us upon the cross, and the very flesh which He offered as a victim for our redemption. He has, then, been prodigal in performing wonders in order to procure us this happiness.

St. Ambrose, in one of his discourses, addressing the martyr St. Lawrence, speaks thus : “ Whence comes, then, O illustrious martyr of Christ ! whence comes the indomitable courage which makes you support, with apparent insensibility, the most frightful torments that can be inflicted ? The fire consumes your members, and you are undaunted in the presence of your tormentors and executioners. Ah ! it is because you have received, in the Holy Communion, the body of your divine Master ; it is because the blood of the Strong and the Mighty is circulating in your veins !

EXERCISES.—1. What is the Blessed Eucharist ? — 2. By what words did our divine Lord promise the Eucharist ?—3. When and how did he fulfil this promise ? — 4. Into what are the substances of the bread and wine changed ? — 5. Is Jesus Christ whole and entire under each species ? — 6. How is this admirable change effected ? — 7. What will aid us to believe all those wonders, though they are above our understanding ?

SECTION II.

Of the Dispositions necessary for receiving the Holy Communion.

There is no one of the sacraments which unites us so intimately with God, as the Blessed Eucharist ; there is, consequently, none for which we should prepare with so much care. The more holy a sacrament is, the more holy should be our dispositions for receiving it. When we are about to communicate, it is not for man, it is for God himself, that we prepare a dwelling. The dispositions which we should bring are of two kinds ; one regards the soul, the other, the body. The first disposition of the soul is purity of conscience. A man must “ prove himself,”* ac-

* 1 Cor., xi, 28.

ording to the precept of the Apostle, before he eats this heavenly bread, and, if his conscience is charged with any mortal offence, he must have recourse to the sacrament of Penance to obtain pardon, before he communicates. The Holy Eucharist supposes spiritual life in those who receive it; therefore, to be nourished by it, we must be living the life of grace. It is the God of purity who comes to visit us; He would enter with horror into an impure heart. The washing of the Apostles' feet, before He gave them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, is a lively figure of the purity with which we should approach this divine banquet. In the primitive Church, the deacon, before the consecration of the divine mysteries, turned to the people, saying, in a loud voice, "Things that are holy are but for the holy." The sanctity of Baptism, either preserved, from the time of its reception, or, if lost, repaired by Penance, is the "wedding garment,"* with which we must be attired when we would partake of the banquet of the "Father of the family." This purity of heart is the most essential of the dispositions for partaking of this holy sacrament; but we should be careful to join with it, a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent charity.

The Church calls the Holy Eucharist a sacrament of faith; he who approaches it must believe without the shadow of doubt, that it is our Lord Jesus Christ whom he is going to receive; he who came into this world, and suffered death for our salvation; who rose glorious and immortal from the dead; and is now in Heaven at the right hand of his Eternal Father.

A firm hope consists in expecting, with confidence, from Jesus Christ, all that we ask of him with reference to our salvation. Since he gives himself entirely to us, what can he refuse us? He declares that he who eats his flesh and drinks his blood has everlasting life, and that he will raise him up at the last day. After such a promise what confidence ought we not to have in his goodness! We should approach the holy table with the same dispositions as the woman of the Gospel, who said within herself, "If I shall

* Matt, xxii, 12

touch only his garment, I shall be healed :''* and she was accordingly cured in the same hour.

The Eucharist is a sacrament of love ; it was through this most incomprehensible love that our Lord instituted it. Would it not be monstrous ingratitude to receive Jesus Christ into a cold or indifferent heart ? But this love should be accompanied with profound sentiments of humility, adoration, and gratitude.

Whom do we receive in the Holy Eucharist ? God himself, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe ; Him whose power, sanctity, and other perfections, are infinite. Who are we ? We are of ourselves but nothingness and sin. We should, then, humble ourselves before our God, and acknowledge with the centurion in the Gospel, that we are not worthy to approach Him. We should adore Him with a holy fear, and prostrate ourselves humbly before Him ; for although He is hidden under the veils of the Eucharistic symbols, He is not the less our God. We should excite in our heart an unbounded gratitude ; for if gratitude should be commensurate with the benefit received, what ought to be its extent for a gift which is infinite !

The body should also, in its own way, contribute to honor the divine Guest that we are going to receive. First, it is necessary that we be fasting from the preceding midnight, as the Church has expressly commanded through respect for this august sacrament. She, however, dispenses with the command in those who, being dangerously sick, receive the Blessed Eucharist as a *viaticum*, or as a preparation for their last passage. Secondly, the body should be in a respectful and kneeling posture. This exterior reverence should proceed from, and be the expression of, the interior sentiments of the soul, humbled profoundly before the supreme majesty of God.

Almighty God, being provoked by the cruelty of Pharaoh, and moved by the just complaints of his chosen people, resolved to punish this obstinate prince, and to deliver them from the tyrant's yoke. When the time marked in

* Matt., ix, 21.

his eternal decrees had arrived, God sent his exterminating angel, who, in one night, killed all the first-born of the Egyptians, having beforehand commanded his people to sacrifice and eat a lamb in every family, and to sprinkle with its blood the doors of their houses. that the angel, the minister of his vengeance, might spare the children of his own people. After this He nourished them for forty years in the desert, with manna from Heaven. In these two favors bestowed by God on his people, we have striking figures of the Holy Eucharist. The similitude between the figure and the reality is clearly discernible. The Israelites, the chosen people of God, were alone commanded to sacrifice the mysterious lamb; the exterminating angel spared the first-born of the families whose doors were marked with its blood. Christians alone have the right of immolating the divine Paschal Lamb. The angel, the minister of God's vengeance, will spare all those who are marked with his blood; and our Lord has commanded the faithful to renew frequently the offering of this sacrifice, in memory of their deliverance by his death from the tyranny of the devil. The manna, that heavenly nourishment with which God preserved his people, was also a very appropriate figure of the Sacrament of the Altar. It was called the bread of Heaven; its taste was the most delicious that can be imagined; the Israelites were fed with it only after their deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh.* The Eucharist, as our Lord tells us, is the living bread which came down from Heaven; it is the fruitful source of all graces, but no one can be nourished with it until he has shaken off the yoke of the devil; that is, until he has been delivered from the slavery of sin.

EXERCISES. — 1. — How are we to prepare for the reception of the Holy Eucharist? — 2. How many dispositions are requisite, and in what do they consist?

* See Exodus, xii and xvi.

SECTION III.

Of the Effects of the Holy Eucharist.

This sacrament produces most admirable effects in those who receive it with due dispositions. The first is to unite and incorporate us with Jesus Christ. We become united to him by faith, when we believe the truths which he has revealed, and by charity, when we love him with a perfect love. By faith we pay him the homage of our understanding; by charity we give him our heart. There is another union, however, much more intimate and perfect; it is that which is effected by the participation of his sacred flesh and precious blood; and this union is the proper effect of the Blessed Eucharist. Jesus Christ gives himself entirely to us; he unites his sacred body with ours; and, by this union, we become one and the same body—one and the same spirit with him. As the food which we take nourishes our body, so the Holy Eucharist is the nourishment of our soul; for even as our corporal food is changed into our substance, so the Holy Communion transforms us into Jesus Christ. Hence, St. Paul says, “I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.”*

The second effect of the Holy Eucharist is to augment, confirm, and preserve in us, the spiritual life of grace. Our Blessed Savior, becoming the food of our soul, does not remain inactive within us: he gives an increase of sanctifying grace, confirms us in divine love, and enables us to preserve that precious treasure with a constant fidelity. Hence, the remarkable sanctity which we witness in such as communicate worthily; and what is it but the frequent and devout reception of the adorable Sacrament, the bread of the strong, that supports that young man, though beset with dangers, in a piety which edifies his entire neighborhood and in a regularity of conduct which renders him the model of his family?

The third effect of this august sacrament is to weaken concupiscence, and to moderate the violence of our passions

* Gal., ii, 20.

We are born with a strong inclination to evil ; it is as a venom which has spread itself through our whole nature by the sin of our first parents. The Eucharist does not altogether deliver us from it, but it enfeebles its malignity ; and for this reason the holy Fathers have called it an antidote, a counter-poison. This effect is always experienced by those who receive this sacrament frequently and worthily : they feel their tendency to evil diminish, their inclination to good increase, and the strength and power of their spiritual enemy daily become more and more enfeebled.

The fourth effect of the Eucharist is to give us a pledge of eternal life, and of a glorious resurrection. Jesus Christ himself teaches this consoling truth : " He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," says he, " hath everlasting life ; and I will raise him up in the last day."* The life which the Holy Eucharist communicates to the soul is a beginning, and as it were, a foretaste of a blessed life ; and this life will remain with us and be eternal, unless we, through our own fault, deprive ourselves of its possession. This divine sacrament affects even the body, and is, as it were, the seed and germ of immortality, which will one day cause it to rise from the grave, and invest it with glorious qualities. The presence of Jesus Christ in us, becomes an assured pledge of a glorious immortality, but it is to a fervent Communion that these blessed effects are attributable. If our Communion be tepid, that is, if they be made without sincere piety, or with an affection to venial sin, they cannot be expected to produce such effects ; but if they be unworthy, that is, made in the state of mortal sin, we become guilty of profaning the body of the Lord, which is a horrible sacrilege, and one of the most heinous crimes.

Whilst our Lord Jesus Christ was one day teaching at Capharnaum, those who heard him, put to him the following question : " What shall we do that we may work the works of God ?" to which he replied, " This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom He hath sent." At these words the Jews replied: " What sign therefore dost

* John, vi, 55.

thou show that we may see and may believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written—*He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.*” Then Jesus said to them: “Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life to the world. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.” What more clear than these words of the Eternal Truth? “The bread that I will give is my flesh: . . . my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” Do they not show beyond the shadow of doubt, the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist?—St. JOHN, VI.

EXERCISES. — 1. What effects does the Holy Eucharist produce in those who receive it worthily? — 2. What is the second effect of the Holy Eucharist? — 3. What is the third? — 4. The fourth? — 5. To what kind of Communion are these blessed effects attributable?

SECTION IV.

Of an Unworthy Communion.

Those who communicate in the state of mortal sin, receive, indeed, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but they receive not the graces and salutary effects of this sacrament. According to the alarming words of St. Paul, such persons eat and drink their own judgment and condemnation. “Whosoever,” he says, “shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily,” that is to say, in the state of mortal sin, “shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;” and “eateth and drinketh judgment to

himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."* These words teach us how great is the crime of an unworthy Communion, and how awful are its consequences. This crime is the most dreadful of all sacrileges; it is the profanation of the most august of all the sacraments, and of all that is most holy in religion; it profanes, in the most outrageous manner, the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ; it unites, as far as in its power, infinite sanctity with iniquity, making the adorable blood of our divine Savior flow through veins infected with the abominable venom of sin. The unworthy communicant is guilty of a perfidy and a treason similar to that of Judas: like him he delivers his divine Master to his most cruel enemies; like him, having been loaded with benefits, he violates the most sacred rights of friendship and gratitude; he crucifies him anew; he makes him the sport of his vile passions, and tramples under foot the blood of the New Covenant. How appalling are the consequences of this enormous crime! He who communicates unworthily, eats and drinks judgment and damnation. The unworthy communicant eats and drinks the very decree that condemns him; he incorporates himself with it, and renders that decree in some sort inevitable. Food is inseparable from him who takes it; it changes itself into his flesh and blood; it becomes one and the same thing with him, so that it is impossible again to separate them. In like manner, the unworthy communicant eats his judgment; he changes it, if we may so speak, into himself; his condemnation is written, not in a book, nor upon tables of stone or marble, but upon his own heart; it passes, as it were, into his veins; he carries it incessantly with him. O terrible punishment, which can come but from the anger of a God cruelly outraged! It ordinarily happens that he who commits this crime, falls into hardness of heart and a blindness of mind, which lead to final impenitence. Of this we have a frightful example in the perfidy of Judas. Hardly had he received the Holy Eucharist, when his mind became obscured, and his heart insensible; nothing any longer arrested his course; he arose

* 1 Cor., xi, 27, 28.

abruptly from the table, and consummated his crime. And how did his sacrilege terminate? In despair, death, and eternal reprobation. We must not, however, conclude from all this, that a person who has made an unworthy Communion, should despair of his salvation. God forbid. How great soever his crime may be, he has a resource, for the mercy of God is infinite, and if he recurs to it with an humble and contrite heart, he will not be rejected; the precious blood which he has profaned can yet purify him. But what we are to conclude is, that this crime is hard to be expiated; that he who profanes the body and blood of the Lord, is seldom found to enter into himself; and that every precaution should be taken against so dreadful an evil: yet should we happen to commit it, we must repent without delay, and have recourse as soon as possible to the sacrament of Penance.

The Holy Scriptures furnish an awful example of the effects of an unworthy Communion, in the person of Judas, who had the wickedness to receive our Lord, though his soul was sullied with the crime of avarice, and his mind full of the dark project of betraying him. No sooner had he communicated, than Satan entered into him; he sold his good Master, and delivered him to his enemies; nor could the embrace of the Son of God, nor the sweet name of friend by which he addressed him, soften his savage heart. But what was the end of this monster, the just object of eternal execration? He fell into despair, became his own executioner, and, having hanged himself, his bowels gushed out, and his unhappy soul descended into hell, where it has been for upwards of eighteen hundred years; and alas! all these ages are not even a moment compared with that long eternity during which he is to remain in that place of torments!

EXERCISES —1. What have you to say of persons who communicate in the state of mortal sin? — 2. What does St. Paul say of such persons? — 3. Is the crime of an unworthy Communion very enormous, and why? — 4. Should he who has the misfortune to communicate unworthily despair of salvation?

SECTION V.

Of Frequent Communion.

The Apostle St. Paul, after having spoken in the strongest terms of the enormity of an unworthy Communion, does not advise us to abstain from the Holy Eucharist, but says, "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice."* The fear of communicating unworthily should not cause us to withdraw from the holy table, but it ought to engage us to examine seriously our dispositions, and redouble our vigilance, that we may approach frequently and worthily to so august a sacrament. To communicate unworthily is, without doubt, a great evil; not to communicate is another; both lead inevitably to eternal death. The Eucharist is necessary to preserve the soul in the spiritual life of grace; for the soul, like the body, becomes gradually exhausted, if care is not taken to repair its strength. The means which Jesus Christ has established for preserving this strength, is the holy sacrament of the Eucharist. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man," says he, "and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."† He has instituted it under the species of bread and wine, to show that we ought to receive it frequently. The Holy Eucharist ought to be the ordinary nourishment of the soul, as bread and wine are the ordinary nourishment of the body. In the early ages of Christianity, the faithful well understood this truth; they regarded the Holy Eucharist as the daily bread of the children of God; they received it, therefore, every day, and feared nothing so much as to be deprived of this precious nourishment. The Council of Trent declares its desire that the faithful, every day they assist at Mass, participate, not only spiritually, but really, of this divine banquet. Another Council, after deploring the negligence of Christians in communicating but once a year, exhorts all pastors to instruct their people, on the former frequent use of Communion in the Church; on the wonderful fruit

* 1 Cor., xi, 28.

† John, vi, 54.

it produced ; and to persuade them, that there was no means more proper for bringing back those happy days of primitive fervor, than the devout reception of the adorable Eucharist. If, then, the Church does not rigorously oblige the faithful to more than one Communion in the year, it is not that she thinks this one Communion sufficient to preserve, in her children, the spiritual life of grace ; she does not impose upon them the obligation of communicating more frequently, through fear of multiplying transgressions or sacrileges ; but she desires that they should be sufficiently pure to communicate as frequently as would be necessary for preserving, by virtue of the Eucharist, the life and vigor of their souls. If we loved God, we would frequently unite ourselves to Him ; He invites us to this sacred banquet : “ Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you ; ” * come with confidence, and fear nothing ; come to Me, your Father, and I will give you the most touching pledge of my affection ; come to Me, your God, and I will replenish you with my most precious graces. The most prudent course that can be pursued with regard to frequent Communion is, to go frequently to confession, at least at the approach of the great festivals, and then follow the advice of the confessor, as to the occasions on which we should approach the sacred table. Another practice extremely advantageous is, to make, from time to time, a spiritual Communion. It may be made in the following manner : recollect yourself for a moment, and profoundly adore our Lord present in the Holy Eucharist ; then, with an ardent desire of receiving Jesus Christ really, invite him reverently to come into your heart, and take entire possession of it.

A little boy, named Albinus, not having yet arrived at the age required for First Communion, sighed incessantly for the happy day on which he was to receive his God, hidden under the Eucharistic veils, and he spared no pains to dispose himself for so holy an action. So lively was his horror of sin, that he dreaded even the shadow of evil.

* Matt., xi, 28.

Frequently was he heard to say, that he would not suffer the devil to enter his heart, before his Lord and Redeemer. He applied himself constantly to learn all that he should know concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, and not only endeavored to retain well the words of his catechism, but by seeking instruction and by reflection, he endeavored also to penetrate their meaning. The innocence of his life, the extreme desire which he expressed, and the fervor and earnestness with which he prepared himself, determined his confessor to admit him to the holy table at an earlier age than other children. Albinus, with lively sentiments of joy and gratitude, thanked his confessor, and thought of nothing but of redoubling his efforts to purify his soul more and more, and of preparing it as a dwelling not unworthy of the divine Guest who was about to visit it. Before his Communion, he made a spiritual retreat, and a general confession. To see the torrent of tears which he shed, and the lively sorrow of heart which he manifested, one would suppose that there was not a greater sinner upon earth. Although he had never sullied the precious robe of his baptismal innocence by the commission of a single mortal sin, yet the light of grace, which dwelt within him, made him regard his lightest faults as so many odious monsters, and caused him to grieve continually, that he had been so unfortunate as to offend, even venially, a God so good and loving, whom he was now to receive as the nourishment of his soul.

In these, and similar sentiments, he passed his retreat. The happy moment, for which he had long sighed, having at length arrived, he received the Holy Communion. It would be impossible to describe adequately his piety and angelic demeanor on this solemn occasion. The devotion of his heart manifested itself in sighs, tears, and transports of love and gratitude. "Yes, my God," said he, "since Thou hast been so good as to give Thyself to me, I give myself entirely to Thee; since Thou hast united Thyself so intimately with me, nothing shall henceforth separate me from Thee. I should, indeed, be the most ungrateful of creatures, if I did not consecrate my heart, without reserve, to a God who has loved me with an infinite love."

These were not the sentiments of a passing fervor, which vanish with the occasion that gave them birth. Albinus never forgot this blessed and happy day, nor the engagements which he then contracted with God. The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which he received, became to him a salutary nourishment, which produced a sensible increase in virtue and piety. Far from satisfying his hunger, this heavenly bread served, on the contrary, but to redouble it. He continued to approach the holy table every fortnight, knowing well that this heavenly food is as necessary for the soul, as earthly nourishment is for the body, and that it is impossible to persevere constantly in the path of innocence and piety, without frequently receiving this adorable sacrament.

EXERCISES — 1. Should the fear of communicating unworthily prevent us from approaching the Holy Eucharist? — 2. What was the practice of the primitive Christians respecting the Holy Communion? — 3. Why does the Church not require us to communicate oftener than once a year? — 4. How may spiritual Communion be made?

SECTION VI.

Of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Eucharist is not only a sacrament, in which our Lord Jesus Christ gives himself to us to be the spiritual nourishment of our soul; it is also a sacrifice, in which he offers himself for us as a victim to his Eternal Father. Not satisfied with having once offered himself upon the cross for our redemption, he has left in his Church a sacrifice, which represents that of the cross, applies to us its merits, and which will perpetuate its remembrance to the end of the world. It was for this reason, that, having at his last supper offered his sacred body and blood, under the appearances of bread and wine, to his Eternal Father, and given them to be eaten and drunk by the Apostles, he constituted these Apostles Priests of the New Covenant, commanding them and their successors in the ministry to do what he had

done. "Do this," said he, "for a commemoration of me." Such is, and has been, at all times, the universal belief of the Catholic Church.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the representation and the renewal of that of the cross; the representation, because the separate consecration of the bread and wine reminds us forcibly of the real separation of our Lord's body and blood, which took place at his death; the renewal, because it is the same Victim, the same Host, the same High Priest, and, consequently, the same sacrifice, which is offered on the altar, as was once offered upon the cross. The only difference is in the manner of offering. On the cross Christ offered himself by himself; on the altar he offers himself by the ministry of his Priests; on the cross he offered himself in a bloody manner; on the altar he offers himself in an unbloody manner. Such is the sacrifice of the Christian religion; an august sacrifice, which unites in itself all the advantages of which the different sacrifices of the Old Law were but the types and figures. It is a sacrifice of adoration, by which we acknowledge the sovereign dominion which God has over all his creatures; a sacrifice of thanksgiving, by which we thank Him for all his benefits; a sacrifice of impetration, by which we obtain new favors; and a sacrifice of propitiation, by which we appease his justice.

By the oblation which Jesus Christ makes of himself to his Father, he renders the most perfect homage that can be offered to the Deity; and nothing can incline God more efficaciously to look on us with an eye of mercy, than to remind Him of the cruel death to which his beloved Son willingly submitted, in order to reconcile us with Him.

Instructed in the Eucharistic mystery, persuaded that Jesus Christ is really present upon the altar, and that he there renews and perpetuates the remembrance of his death, with what piety and gratitude ought we assist at this august sacrifice! Had we been present on Calvary at the crucifixion of our Lord, would we not have been penetrated

with sorrow, compunction, and love, at beholding so touching a spectacle? And since the Sacrifice of the Mass is the very same as that of the cross, ought not the like sentiments to animate us when we assist at it? We should offer the Mass to God in union with the Priest, and for the intentions with which he offers. We should, in particular, offer this adorable sacrifice to render to God the sovereign worship which is due to Him alone, in thanksgiving for all his benefits, for the remission of our sins, and to obtain all the graces of which we stand in need.

The Mass can be offered to God only, because it is a homage of our dependence and servitude. It is sometimes offered in memory of the saints, to praise and thank God for the victories which they have obtained by the assistance of his grace, and for the glory with which He has crowned them in Heaven, and to beg that they may unite their prayers with ours while we assist at this holy sacrifice. It is offered not only for the living, but also for the dead, who are still expiating their sins in purgatory. The Church begs for them, through the merits of this sacrifice, that their souls may be comforted in the pains which they suffer, and that they may be speedily delivered from them, and enter into Heaven. This offering of sacrifice for the dead is of the earliest antiquity, and has come down to us from the very time of the Apostles.

A good and pious mother of a family was accustomed to hear Mass every day. On Sunday, she offered it to comply with the precept of the Church; on Monday, for the souls in purgatory; on Tuesday, for the conversion of sinners, and perseverance of the just; on Wednesday, to thank God for the favors bestowed on the angels and saints; on Thursday, in honor of Jesus Christ, in the most Blessed Sacrament; on Friday, in honor of his sacred passion; and on Saturday, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, placing herself and her family under her protection. She was long faithful to this pious practice, and was convinced, that by means of it, she had drawn down many blessings on herself and family.

William Rufin, a student, whose life was a model of youthful piety, felt the greatest delight in assisting at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He acquitted himself of this duty with such tender piety and angelic fervor, that it was impossible to see him without being excited to devotion; and we may safely assert, that it was by means of this holy exercise, that he obtained from God many of those extraordinary graces, which elevated him to so eminent a degree of sanctity.—CARRON.

EXERCISES. — 1 Is the Eucharist anything else than a sacrament? — 2. What name is given to the Eucharist considered as a sacrifice? — 3. — Of what is the Sacrifice of the Mass the representation and renewal? — 4. Of what duties do we acquit ourselves by the Sacrifice of the Mass? — 5. What homage does Jesus Christ render the Deity by this adorable sacrifice? — 6. How should we assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass? — 7. To whom alone is the Sacrifice of the Mass offered? — 8. Is this Sacrifice offered up only for the living?

CHAPTER V.

OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature, Form, and Necessity of Penance.

Penance is a sacrament which remits the sins committed after Baptism, however great or numerous they may be, provided the sinner accuse himself of them with the necessary dispositions. This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ, when, after his resurrection, he breathed upon his Apostles, and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."* Again, he says, "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."†

The *form* of this sacrament consists in the words of the Priest, who is the minister of it: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

* John, xx, 22, 23.

† Matt., xviii, 18.

Holy Ghost." The *remote and necessary matter* of this sacrament is, every mortal sin, committed after Baptism, and not already confessed. *Sufficient*, though not necessary, *matter*, is every venial sin committed after Baptism, as is also every mortal sin, which was duly confessed. The *proximate matter* consists in the acts of the penitent; viz, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, the last of which is only integral; the first two are essential.

Hear the Fathers of Trent on the necessity of the sacrament of Penance: "For those who fall into sin after Baptism," said they, "the sacrament of Penance is as necessary to salvation, as Baptism for those who have not been already baptized." St. Jerome calls Penance "a second plank;" for, "as he who suffers shipwreck," observes the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "has no hope of safety, unless, perchance, he seize on some plank from the wreck; so he that suffers the shipwreck of baptismal innocence, unless he cling to the saving plank of Penance, may abandon all hope of salvation."

Whoever, then, has committed mortal sin, cannot obtain the remission of it but by means of this sacrament, or by an act of perfect contrition, which includes the desire of receiving it. Let no one, therefore, say, "I will do penance in private, I will do penance before God." This does not suffice, says St. Augustine; you must have recourse to the sacrament. As the sins committed before Baptism can be remitted only by this first sacrament, so the sins committed after Baptism cannot be remitted but by the sacrament of Penance. I speak of mortal sins, because venial sins may be remitted by prayers and other good works. It is, notwithstanding, very useful to confess venial sins, and to receive absolution for them, because it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to distinguish venial sins from those which are mortal, and because the absolution which we receive augments the grace of God in our soul. The sacrament of Penance is a kind of second Baptism, which is offered to sinners who have lost the grace of the first; but this second is both painful and laborious; it requires tears, sighs, and labors. In the first Baptism, God displays his pure mercy,

and grants the sinner pardon without any reserve whatever; in the second, He mixes justice with mercy, and is reconciled with him on conditions painful and humiliating. Besides, the holy rigors of penance are not only a salutary remedy for the expiation of past sins, but also a curb, which prevents their repetition; repressing our passions, and obliging us to be, for the future, more vigilant and firm in resisting the seductive attractions of the world and the flesh. To receive worthily the sacrament of Penance, three things are necessary; namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Monseigneur de La Mothe d'Orléans, Bishop of Amiens, confessed every eight days. During his preparation he usually made three stations; the first in hell, the second in Heaven, and the third on Calvary. He first entered in spirit the prison of the damned, and imagined he there saw the place to which he feared he had deserved to be consigned in the midst of devouring and eternal fire, in the society of the reprobate. He then returned thanks to God for having hitherto preserved him from falling into this frightful abyss; begged of Him to show him mercy; and prayed for all the graces necessary for his perseverance in virtue. He then entered the abode of the blessed—the dwelling-place of glory and happiness,—and wept to think that by sin he had closed its gates; he begged of the Lord to open them to him, and invoked the Blessed Virgin and the saints to assist him that, by their intercession, he might obtain a share in the happiness which they possess, and that glory with which they are crowned. He afterwards went in spirit to Mount Calvary, and reflecting devoutly and attentively on all our Blessed Lord had suffered, he said: “Behold my work! I am the cause of those sorrows which my Lord has endured; my sins, with those of other sinners, have covered the body of the Man-God with wounds and blood, and have nailed him to the cross. O good Jesus, what evil hast thou done? How have I been capable of treating thee so cruelly, who art deserving of an infinite love! Thou, O dearest Redeemer, art infinitely good; shall I not, there-

fore, love thee with all my strength? Yes, Lord, I love thee with my whole heart; and I bitterly regret that I have ever offended thee!"

What happy fruits should we not derive from our confessions, what progress should we not make in the way of God, were we to follow the method of this virtuous prelate!

EXERCISES. — 1. What is Penance, and by whom was it instituted? — 2. What are the *form* and *matter* of this sacrament? — 3. What do the holy Fathers say of the necessity of the sacrament of Penance? — 4. What must a person do who has had the misfortune to lose the grace of God by mortal sin? — 5. Can venial sins be remitted by other means than by the sacrament of Penance? — 6. What difference is there between this sacrament and that of Baptism?

SECTION II.

Of Contrition.

Contrition is a hearty sorrow and detestation of sin committed, with a firm resolution of sinning no more. This first disposition is so necessary, that, without it, no sin, not even venial, can be forgiven. A sick man who has lost the use of speech, is dispensed from confession; an immediate death after confession exempts from satisfaction, at least in this life; but nothing whatever can dispense from contrition.

God promises pardon to those only who are converted to Him with their whole heart, in the bitterness of profound sorrow, and who rend their heart and not their garments. Contrition, to be sincere, must have six conditions. It must be *interior*; that is, it must be in the heart, and not merely upon the lips. Hence, to read, or to repeat acts of contrition, is not alone sufficient; it is the heart that has sinned; in the heart, then, the sorrow and detestation of sin must exist. Contrition must be *supernatural*; that is, it must arise from a supernatural motive. It must be excited by a motion of the Holy Ghost, and not by a merely natural motive. To detest sin because it has occasioned some temporal calamity, as, punishment, sickness, or loss of

goods, is not a sorrow sufficient to obtain pardon. The motives of true repentance are: the enormity of sin; the offence it offers to God, and the displeasure it gives Him; the loss of Heaven; the fear of hell; our ingratitude to Jesus Christ, who has done and suffered so much for its expiation. Some one of these, or of such motives, is necessary in order to render our sorrow supernatural. Contrition must be *sovereign*; that is, it must be greater than any other sorrow whatever, so that we must be disposed to lose everything in this world, rather than again be guilty of sin. Sin is, in reality, the greatest of all evils, and causes us to lose the greatest of all goods, the sovereign Good. We ought, then, to be more afflicted for having committed it, than if we had suffered all possible temporal evils. It is not necessary, however, that this sorrow be sensible; it can exist in the heart, without manifesting itself exteriorly, except by works, which are, at the same time, its effects, and the proofs of its sincerity. Contrition must be *universal*; that is, it must extend to all our mortal sins. If there remain a single mortal sin, to which the heart is attached, there is no true contrition. Every mortal sin is a grievous injury to God, and deserves everlasting punishment. There is not one, then, which we should not sincerely detest, if we are desirous of recovering God's favor. Contrition must be accompanied with a *firm purpose of sinning no more, &c.*;* for the kind of contrition required by the Council of Trent is, "a sorrow of the soul, and detestation of sin committed, with a purpose of sinning no more." In fine, contrition must also be accompanied with the *hope of pardon*, "otherwise," remarks St. Liguori, "it will be like the sorrow of the damned, who are sorry for their sins, not because they are offences against God, but because they are the cause of their sufferings; but their sorrow is without hope of pardon."

To repent sincerely of our sins, we must beg it of God by humble prayer. We can go astray and offend God; but we cannot, without his assistance, repent as we ought. We should also reflect attentively on the motives capable of

* See next section.

exciting this sorrow in our heart. We should consider who He is whom we have offended. He is our Creator, our Father, who has given us all that we possess; and who deigned, in his infinite mercy, to redeem us with the blood of his beloved Son. We should also remember to what evils we expose ourselves by sin; it renders us deserving of hell, that abyss of torments, rage, and despair, where body and soul shall burn eternally. It also deprives us of eternal happiness. To these considerations, we should add another, that of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of what he has done for the expiation of sin, to merit for us the grace of true repentance, and the mercy of his Eternal Father. It is impossible to reflect seriously on these great truths, without being moved by them, or without conceiving a deep and sincere detestation of mortal sin.

There are two kinds of contrition; perfect and imperfect. Imperfect contrition is also called *attrition*. Perfect contrition is a sorrow for having offended God, because He is sovereignly good and amiable, and because sin displeases Him; its motive is the love of God; and its effect is to remit sin by itself, provided that the person has a sincere desire of confessing, and has not an opportunity of doing so at the time. Imperfect contrition, or attrition, is a sorrow for having offended God, on account of the turpitude of sin, the fear of eternal punishment, or the loss of eternal beatitude. Its motives not being sufficiently pure, it cannot of itself remit sin; but it is sufficient when joined to absolution, and the confession of sins, provided that it contains a firm hope of pardon, and a beginning of the love of God.

Contrition should not only embrace the past; it should also extend itself to the future, by a firm purpose of never again committing sin. We find in the penitent Magdalene an admirable model of a contrition possessing all the requisite conditions. As soon as she heard that our Lord was at the house of the Pharisee, faithful to the grace which impelled her, she went thither without delay. She was not ashamed to manifest her repentance before all, as she had not been ashamed to give public scandal, by her past irreg

ularities. She entered the room in which the company had assembled, and not daring to appear before Jesus Christ, she humbly cast herself at his feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. She then poured upon them a vessel of precious ointment, which she had brought with her ; thus making use, for the expiation of her sins, of all that she had hitherto employed in offending God. So intense was the love from which her grief proceeded, that she merited to hear from the mouth of Jesus Christ these consoling words : “ Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”*

EXERCISES.—1. What is Contrition, and what is said of its necessity ? — 2. What are the conditions of sincere contrition ? — 3. Can we, of ourselves, repent sincerely for our sins ? — 4. What considerations will help to excite this sorrow ? — 5. How many kinds of contrition are there, and what is the difference between them ?

SECTION III.

Of a Firm Purpose of sinning no more.

We cannot obtain pardon of our sins unless we renounce them with our whole heart, and are disposed, like holy David, when he thus expressed himself ; I have sworn and am resolved to keep God's Commandments. God himself points out the necessity of a firm purpose. “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts ; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him.” † There is, then, no mercy to be hoped for, except sin is renounced. God will not pardon sin without sincere repentance, and this repentance necessarily requires a firm purpose of amendment ; for would it not be a mockery of God, to ask Him for the pardon of a sin, which we were desirous of again committing ? A purpose, to be sincere, must have three conditions. It must be *firm*, that is, it must be a purpose of resolutely suffering every evil rather than offend God by relapsing into sin ; *universal*, extending to

* Luke, vii, 47.

† Isaias, lv, 7.

every mortal sin ; and, finally, *efficacious*, making us practise the means necessary to avoid sin.

There are three marks by which this firm purpose may be known. The first is a change of life. A young person who was proud, obstinate, disobedient, a liar, negligent of his duties, dissipated in his pious exercises, becomes meek, humble, obedient, laborious, a lover of truth, recollected in prayer, modest in the church ; here is a sensible proof of the sincerity of his resolution ; we can entertain no doubt that his repentance was sincere. But can we suppose that he in whom no change of conduct is perceived, has truly renounced his sins ? His promises were upon his lips, but were they from his heart ? Without a resolution of amendment, it is impossible to have true repentance.

The second mark is, to avoid the occasions of sin. There are two sorts of occasions ; the first lead of themselves to sin, such as bad books, plays, bad company, &c. ; and the second are occasions of sin on account of the weakness and dispositions of those who engage in them ; such are certain professions, legitimate in themselves, but which become an occasion of offending God to those who have not sufficient light or strength to discharge the duties of those professions. A person is bound to avoid all immediate occasions of sin, and if he remains willingly in them, it is a proof that he has not a firm purpose of amendment. "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."* It sometimes costs much to nature to separate ourselves from these occasions ; but we must resolve to make the sacrifice, if we desire not to be lost for eternity. In this sense we should understand these words of our Lord : "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. . . . and if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee ; for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell :"[†] that is, though what is an occasion of sin, be to you as dear and precious as an eye or the right arm, you must separate yourself from it, if you wish to be saved.

The third mark of a firm purpose of amendment is, to

* Ecclus., iii, 27.

† Matt., v, 29, 30.

labor to destroy our bad habits, and our facility in committing certain sins, into which we frequently fall. For this purpose, we should carefully watch over ourselves, confess frequently, perform actions contrary to our bad habits; acts of meekness in opposition to anger, of obedience in opposition to indocility, of humility in opposition to pride, &c. We should also impose on ourselves some penitential work, a short prayer, for instance, every time we yield to these evil habits. If a person makes no effort to overcome himself; if he does not avoid the dangerous occasions of falling; if his falls are as frequent as before; if he does not lament them before God, and purify himself by frequent confession, it is a sign that his purpose was not sincere.

In the fourth century, Sapor, king of Persia, violently persecuted the Christians, and ordered that death should be inflicted on every Priest who refused to renounce Jesus Christ. St. Simeon, Archbishop of Seleucia, a most zealous prelate, and a powerful defender of the Christian faith, was brought before him. Sapor exhorted him to adore the sun, making him the most magnificent promises if he would obey; but threatening, in case of disobedience, to put him to death, and to banish all the Christians in his empire. Simeon replied: "I will not adore the sun; to do so would be a betrayal of my religion." The king ordered him to prison, hoping that the cruel treatment he should receive, would induce him to change his determination. As he was led thither, an old eunuch, named Usthazanes, the superintendent of the imperial palace, and who had been once a Christian, was deeply affected on seeing the holy Archbishop and bowed down before him in token of respect. The Archbishop, to show the little value which he set on any testimony of respect coming from one who had renounced his religion, turned aside his head, reproaching him, by this movement, with his cowardice and impiety in adoring the sun and denying his faith. The eunuch, unable to bear this well-merited treatment, burst into tears, and departing, dressed himself in mourning, to give public proof of his repentance. Thus clothed, he repaired to the palace,

and, bathed in tears, exclaimed: "Miserable wretch that I am! what am I to expect from Jesus Christ, whom I have so shamefully renounced, if I am so sensible of the contempt shown me, on account of my apostacy, by Simeon, who is but his minister?" The king, hearing that his favorite eunuch was much afflicted, had him conducted into his presence, and asked what disgrace had befallen him. "Oh!" replied the eunuch, "would that every disgrace had fallen upon me rather than that which has caused my sorrow. I weep that I am not dead; that I can yet see that sun, which I had the misfortune to adore, rather than excite your displeasure. I deserve a double death; one for having betrayed Jesus Christ, my adorable Redeemer, and the other for having deceived you." Having said this, he protested, in the most earnest terms, that he would never again prove a traitor to Him whom he acknowledged and adored as his God. At these words, Sapor became enraged, and swore he would put to death every Christian in his realm; nevertheless, he endeavored, through compassion for his age, as he said, to prevail on the eunuch to change his determination. "No," said this true penitent, "I will never be so senselessly impious as to render to the creature the worship which is due only to the Creator." The king, seeing his constancy, ordered him to be beheaded. He heard the sentence with joy, and only begged that Sapor, in return for the fidelity with which he had served him for so many years, might order a herald to proclaim that he had not been condemned on account of any crime against the state, but because he was a Christian, and refused to betray his God. Sapor, hoping that his inflexible rigor to an old man, who had so long and faithfully served him, would intimidate Christians, granted the request, and the sentence was executed according to the king's direction. In the person of this martyr for the faith of Christ, we see an example of true contrition, accompanied with a firm purpose of amendment.

EXERCISES.—1. How many are the marks of a firm purpose of amendment, and what is the first?—2. What is the second mark of a firm purpose?—3. What is the third?

SECTION IV.

Of Confession.

Confession, the second part of the sacrament of Penance, is an accusation of all one's sins, made to an approved Priest, for the purpose of obtaining pardon. Every Priest receives, at his ordination, the power of forgiving sin; but he can exercise that power only in virtue of a particular mission from his Bishop, who prescribes the place and extent of his jurisdiction. Any Priest who has not received this mission, or who exercises it without the authority of the Bishop, cannot, in ordinary circumstances, remit sin. There are certain grave offences, the remission of which is reserved to the Bishop, for the purpose of inspiring those who have committed them with a greater horror; these are called *reserved cases*.

We are bound to accuse ourselves of all the mortal sins we have committed, even of those which lie concealed from the eyes of others, such as evil thoughts and desires. This obligation is a natural consequence of the power Jesus Christ gave to his Apostles of forgiving and retaining sins; for they cannot judge the consciences of others if they do not know them, nor can they know them except by the confession of the sinner himself.

Confession should be humble, sincere, and entire. It should be *humble*: the penitent should consider himself, while kneeling beside the confessor, as a criminal prostrate before the Divine Majesty, humbly acknowledging his crimes; and while avowing that he is unworthy of forgiveness, he should hope to obtain it through the merits of Jesus Christ. It must be *sincere*; that is, he must accuse himself of his sins exactly as he knows them, and must not extenuate their enormity either by studied expressions, or by negligence in his examination of conscience; neither is it allowable to aggravate them. It must be *entire*; that

is, he must confess the kind, the number, and the considerable circumstances; the *kind*; for it is not sufficient to say in a general manner, I have sinned very much; but the penitent must declare in particular, what kind of sin he has committed, whether it was a theft, a slander, a lie, &c. Without this, the confessor cannot know the state of the penitent's soul, nor prescribe suitable remedies and penances. He must confess the *number* of his sins, telling as nearly as he possibly can, how many times he has committed each sin. If he cannot exact of his memory a faithful account of the number of his sins, he is to declare it in such manner as he best can; for example, if it be a sin in which he has lived for any considerable time, let him tell about how often he has, on an average, offended during each day, each week, or each month, as the case may be. If, however, a person had committed a sin which has not had this continuance, but into which he has several times fallen, and cannot remember how often he has thus offended, he should declare, at least, whether he has committed it as often as occasion offered, or whether he has sometimes resisted it. He must also declare those aggravating circumstances which change the species of the sin; as, the circumstance of a vessel's being sacred, makes the stealing of it not only a theft but a sacrilege; the circumstance of neighbors, being parents, makes insult or hatred of them, not only a sin against fraternal charity, but also against filial love and reverence. Those circumstances must also be declared which, though they do not change the species, are considered necessary to be known by the confessor; as, for example, for estimating the amount of restitution, &c. But, in order to confess our sins in this manner, we must know them; hence, the necessity of the *examination of conscience*.

The Empress Jane, a princess ornamented with every virtue that could add dignity to her exalted station, selected as her confessor, St. John Nepomucene, one of the canons of the Church of Prague. Her husband, a person of very suspicious disposition, was desirous of knowing

what she had confessed, and one day, after she had made her confession, went to her confessor, requiring him to reveal what the empress had told him. The saintly man calmly replied, that he could not reveal it: that the secret of confession was inviolable; and that what was made known in confession, was the same as if it had never been revealed. The emperor was irritated, but kept a gloomy silence. Some days after, he sent for St. John, and endeavored, by flatteries, promises, and even threats, to induce him to reveal the confession of the empress; but all in vain. He then caused him to be treated with the grossest inhumanity; but being unable to extort a single word from him, and seeing that every means which he had hitherto employed was incapable of shaking his constancy, he at length threatened him with death unless he complied. "You can put me to death," said the saint, "but you shall not oblige me to reveal what was confided to me in confession." The emperor, being no longer able to restrain his fury, ordered St. John to be bound, hands and feet, and cast into the river. The order was executed; the holy Priest was drowned: but his body, having been taken out of the water was buried, and God was pleased to give public demonstration of the sanctity of his servant by innumerable miracles which were wrought at his tomb.—FELLER.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is confession? — 2. Of what sins are we to accuse ourselves in confession? — 3. What qualities should confession have? — 4. What is meant by saying that it should be *humble? sincere? entire?* — 5. What is a person to do who cannot remember the exact number of his sins? — 6. What is meant by aggravating circumstances?

SECTION V.

Examination of Conscience.

NECESSITY OF THE EXAMINATION.—This necessity is founded upon that of accusing ourselves of all the sins which we have committed. How can we accuse ourselves of them if we do not know them? The holy Council of Trent requires that we prepare for confession by a diligent self-examination. A person who, through neglect of making this exam

mation, omits to accuse himself of a mortal sin in confession, will not obtain the pardon of his sins, even though he receives absolution. On the contrary, he will profane the sacrament, and thus increase his guilt before God.

CONDITIONS OF THE EXAMINATION.—This examination ought to be made with *attention*. Through want of attention many sins are passed over, and not discovered, particularly sins of omission and of habit; sins of anger, of thought, of skulder, and the like, to which a person easily becomes accustomed. It ought also to be made with *strictness*. For want of this, we sometimes consider as light and trivial, sins which are very grievous. Of this number are those which are opposed to the love of the neighbor, and to the holy virtue of purity. Happy the truly pious, who are always in the disposition of not sinning deliberately, in even the most trivial matter! They have no need of a long examination; and if they happen to commit a considerable fault, it is continually present to their mind; they view it as a terrible monster, and will be sure not to forget it when they go to confession.

Persons who confess but rarely, particularly if they be not well instructed, will have much difficulty in discovering their sins: they would derive assistance from the *table of sins*, commonly given in prayer books.* A knowledge of their sins, of their number, &c., will, by means of this examination, be acquired by those who, desirous of knowing them, beg of God the light to discover them, follow an approved method, and listen to the dictates of their conscience.

When persons examine themselves for a general confession, or for one of some years, it is sometimes advisable to commit to writing, as a help to the memory, the sins which they may have discovered. Such persons would do well to think frequently during their examination, that God is present, and to say to Him: "Lord, make known to me the number and enormity of my sins, and grant me, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of confessing them with sincerity, and of detesting them from the bottom

* See St. Patrick's Manual, page 76.

of my heart." After the examination, they ought to excite themselves to a hearty sorrow, and make frequent acts of contrition. It is also recommended to recite slowly, and with much attention, the *confiteor*, or general confession,

A person who was desirous of leading a regular life, made a retreat of some days, during which he wrote his general confession. While he was meditating on hell, and was penetrated with the salutary thought of the eternal torments of the damned, he cast his eyes on the paper which contained his confession. At the sight of the sins of his entire life, his fears redoubled, and taking the paper, he said, "Oh what fuel for eternal fire!" Such was the impression which this reflection produced, that he resolved to renounce for ever the follies of the world, and to devote himself thenceforward to a life of retirement and regularity.

EXERCISES. — 1. On what is the necessity of the examination of conscience founded? — 2. How should it be made? — 3. From what may persons who confess but rarely derive much assistance? — 4. What other means may be employed as a help to the memory?

SECTION VI.

Of Sacrilegious Confession.

To receive absolution without the necessary dispositions, would not only render it null and void, but would be a new sin,—a sacrilege, being a profanation of the sacrament. In stead, then, of appeasing the anger of God, we, by a bad confession, outrage Him, trample upon the adorable blood of his Son, and profane it in a manner more criminal than when the Jews shed it on the cross; thus changing into a poison, the remedy which had been prepared to heal us. Many young persons, it is to be feared, render themselves guilty of this crime. What are the causes of so deplorable a misfortune? In some it is the shame of declaring certain sins. The devil, that spirit of malice and deceit, diminishes in their sight, the enormity of the sin, when they are committing it; but, when there is question of confessing it, he shows it to them in all its turpitude. Nothing can be

more foolish than this false shame. The confessor is obliged by all laws, natural, human, and divine, to observe the most inviolable secrecy regarding what is revealed to him in confession. Out of that sacred tribunal, he can make no use whatever of anything that is told him. We should not be apprehensive of reproaches, bitterness, or insults; the advice which the confessor gives is dictated by the purest charity. He to whom you declare your sins is not an angel; he is a man like yourself, subject to weaknesses, and, therefore, inclined to compassionate yours. He is a faithful friend, who desires your pardon and your return to virtue; a tender father, who will be touched with the marks of confidence which you give him, and who thinks of nothing but of rendering you assistance. Does shame restrain us, when there is question of making known to a physician some disease, particularly when its concealment may cause death? The love of life overcomes every repugnance. How, then, can a person yield to shame, when the soul has received a mortal wound? How is it, that he has not strength to reveal it to him, who alone can apply a salutary remedy? What does he gain by concealing at present from his confessor, the knowledge of his sins? Can he conceal them from God? Must he not confess them at some time or other? If he does not, he shall perish eternally; and, on the last day, they shall be made known to all mankind.

There are others whom the fear of not being permitted to make their First Communion, or to receive the Blessed Eucharist at Easter time, prevents from discovering the state of their soul to their confessor; but what greater folly can there be, than to profane two sacraments, rather than that their First Communion or Easter duty should be postponed? Many who receive the sacramental absolution with undue dispositions, consider this apparent remission of their sins as a real one; think no more of repenting of their sins; profane all the sacraments which they afterwards receive; and die, almost always, in the state of final impenitence. Others are reproached by their conscience, during their whole life, with this enormous crime, and are exposed to the most frightful despair; or, being hardened

in their iniquity, they persevere in it until death. The minister of God says to them, "Go in peace;" but God shall say to these counterfeit penitents, "Go with my malediction." The only remedy for so great an evil is a general confession, made with all the necessary dispositions. He, on the contrary, who has opened his heart to his confessor, and who has employed a suitable time in his examination, is well indemnified afterwards, for the trouble and pains which he has undergone. The pain is soon over, and there remains nothing but the testimony of a good conscience; he believes that his Communion is well made; peace reigns in his heart; during the whole course of his after-life, he blesses the happy moment when he gained a victory over himself, which secured him a sweet tranquillity here, and will obtain for him an eternal recompense hereafter.

"Take care," said a servant of God, speaking to himself, "not to render yourself guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ; this sacred blood is priceless; it is the blood of the Just by excellence; the blood of a God, by the intimate union it has with his divinity. This adorable blood has been shed for my redemption. It is given for my benefit. I can use it at the sacred tribunal, to purify me from my sins, and at the table of the Lord, for the nourishment of my soul; but, what a monster of ingratitude should I be, if I treated it like him who tramples it under foot, by making a confession without sincerity or true contrition, and communicating afterwards in the state of mortal sin! Oh! how well does he merit hell, who is guilty of this horrible crime! O my Savior!" he added, "do not permit that I render myself guilty of your adorable blood. Ah! rather let me die a thousand times, than be guilty of so monstrous an ingratitude!"

St. Augustine had the courage to write his confessions, and publish his errors and disorders, that he might make known, everywhere, the mercy of God in pardoning his sins. The humility which he evinced, in thus making known

his sins, drew down upon him such abundant graces, that he afterwards became a great saint.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is the result of receiving absolution without the necessary dispositions? — 2. What are the principal causes of so deplorable a misfortune, and what must be done to avoid it? — 3. What are the dreadful consequences of a sacrilegious confession? — 4. What, on the contrary, are the happy results of a good confession?

SECTION VII.

Of the Manner of Confessing.

The penitent places himself on his knees, to express by this humble posture, the confusion and sorrow with which he is penetrated for having offended God, whose minister he acknowledges his confessor to be. He should also humble himself interiorly, and repent sincerely of having had the misfortune to commit sin. He addresses the Priest by the name of *father*, saying, "Bless me, father, for I have sinned." Your confessor is the father of your soul; his function in the holy tribunal is, to introduce Jesus Christ into your heart, to impart to you the life of grace if you have lost it, or to increase it if you are living in the sight of God, by the possession of this treasure. Consider him as a tender father, filled with zeal for your salvation, and therefore deserving of your respect, confidence, and obedience. In begging the Priest's blessing, it is not because the penitent has sinned, that he merits that blessing; by sinning, he rendered himself unworthy of receiving a blessing from God, by the hand of his minister. These words signify: Obtain for me, father, the grace of a true conversion, that, being rightly disposed, I may be pardoned my sins, of which I repent with my whole heart.

The *confiteor* is an excellent form of contrition, and the penitent should, in reciting it, be deeply penetrated with the sentiments it conveys. He confesses in general to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to St. Michael, St. John Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that he has sinned exceedingly, and that he can attribute only to himself, the sins which he has committed. He com-

mends himself to the mercy of God, and invokes the saints, that he may obtain mercy through their intercession. After this general declaration, he enters into a detailed accusation to the minister of God, having first told how long it is since his last confession; whether he then received absolution; and whether he performed, exactly and religiously, the penance which had been imposed upon him.

In declaring his sins, he should remember that he accuses himself before his judge, and, consequently, should speak in a manner expressive of the humiliation which he feels for having offended God, and of the sorrow with which he is justly penetrated at the remembrance of his transgressions. He then declares his sorrow, and begs penance and absolution of God's minister. In begging penance, he requests his confessor to ordain what he shall say or do in punishment for the sins he has committed, and as a means of preventing him from committing them for the future. He knows, or he ought to know, that sin must be punished, either in this life, by the voluntary acts of the penitent, or in the other, by the chastising hand of God's avenging justice.

In begging the absolution, he acknowledges the power of remitting sin, which our Lord left to the pastors of his Church; he prays that this power may be exercised in his favor, and then finishes the confiteor. The confessor is appointed by Jesus Christ, the judge between him and the sinner; he is therefore obliged to follow the rules of Christian prudence, and cannot, without betraying his ministry, pronounce a favorable sentence, when he has reason to believe that God will not ratify it. Such criminal indulgence would not discharge the penitent from the guilt of his sins, but would render the confessor guilty of sacrilege; and, instead of being a benefit to the sinner, who is not rightly disposed, may be the seal of his reprobation—the cause of his eternal ruin.

A young person who was reputed pious, but who had not sufficient diffidence in himself, neglected, in time of

temptation, to have recourse to God by humble prayer. He fell, in consequence, into a sin, which he felt a strong disinclination to confess. But regretting sincerely the sin which he had committed, he said to himself: "Whatever it may cost me, I will go at once to confession, and will lay open my heart to the minister of Jesus Christ." He went accordingly; but on his way he felt the disinclination to confess his sin return, and imagined he heard the devil say to him, "Whither are you going?" But he, immediately, and with great courage and earnestness, replied: "I am going to confound you, and to cover myself with confusion." He who has the courage thus to accuse himself of his sins, feels, as it were, relieved from an intolerable burden, and is amply indemnified for the momentary pain and confusion attending his self-accusation, by the joy and interior peace which follow it.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES.—1. What posture should the penitent take while confessing, and by what name should he address the Priest?—2. What is the meaning of the words "*Bless me, father, &c.*"?—3. With what sentiments should the penitent recite the *confiteor* and declare his sins?—4. What does he ask of the Priest in finishing the *confiteor*?

SECTION VIII.

Of Satisfaction.

Satisfaction, which is the third and last part of the sacrament of Penance, is a reparation offered to God, for the sins which we have committed. Without the acceptance of the penance imposed, and a sincere desire to perform it, the sins of the penitent are not remitted. It is God who forgives sin; He alone, then, is Master of the conditions to which He annexes pardon. In the sacrament of Baptism, He pardons the sinner without any satisfaction whatever, and, therefore, the pastors of the Church do not impose penance on those whom they baptize, how great soever their sins may have been. It is not so in the sacrament of Penance. God, by the ministry of his Priests, remits the eternal punishment due to sin, if the penitent has the necessary dispositions; but there ordinarily re-

mains a temporal punishment, to which the penitent is bound to submit. He ought, therefore, to perform with fidelity the penance imposed in confession, and apply himself to the practice of other pious and edifying works, in order to satisfy, as far as in his power, the justice of God.

Those who die before they satisfy, to the full extent, this debt of temporal punishment, must finish the expiation of their sins in purgatory. It is agreeable to the justice of God, that those who abuse the grace received in Baptism, and violate its promises, should be received with more difficulty to reconciliation. He who has dishonored the glorious qualities of child of God, of member of Jesus Christ and temple of the Holy Ghost; who has treated with indifference the adorable blood with which he was sanctified, and rendered valueless the grace which he received, should not find so easy a pardon as he who has not been baptized, and whose sins, committed, in great part, through ignorance, do not bear the same character of ingratitude. Besides, through the mercy of God, the penitent sinner derives great advantage from the chastisement which he receives; as he finds in it a curb on his passions, and an excellent remedy against the evil habits which he has contracted. The penance which the confessor imposes, not only serves as an expiation of past offences, but also tends to the destruction of the passions from which those offences proceeded. Thus, humiliations serve to overcome the passion of pride; alms, that of avarice; fasting, that of intemperance. &c.: and these penances should, as much as possible, bear some proportion to the sins committed, and, therefore, be greater or less according to their number and enormity.

The most ordinary penitential works are prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds. By prayer is to be understood all acts of religion, pious reading, and assiduity at the divine offices; by fasting, all that mortifies the senses; and by alms, all the assistance given to our neighbor, in his spiritual and corporal necessities. God also accepts, in satisfaction for our sins, all the afflictions which befall us: such as sickness, injuries, and persecutions; but to render these

valuable in his sight, we must bear them in a spirit of penance, and unite them with the sufferings and satisfactions of Jesus Christ, through whose merits alone our satisfactory works are acceptable to God. Our works are presented to the Eternal Father by our Lord Jesus Christ, who imparts to them all their merit and value.

We are also obliged to make satisfaction to our neighbor, if we have injured him either in his person, by ill treatment; in his honor, by lies and calumny; or in his goods, by theft or injustice. God will not pardon the sinner, unless he repairs, as far as in his power, the injury done to his neighbor, in his person, property, or character.

St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony, St. Mary of Egypt, and several others, who followed their example, were models of penance. They renounced all they possessed, hid themselves in frightful deserts, clothed themselves in sackcloth, and lived, during the greater portion of their life, on wild pulse and herbs. They adopted this course of life, from a deep sense of what was due to the justice of God, and from the conviction, that sin must be atoned for, either in this world or in the next.—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is the third part of the sacrament of Penance, and in what does it consist? — 2. Show us the necessity of satisfaction. — 3. What difference, as regards satisfaction, is there between Baptism and Penance? — 4. Where are persons to expiate their sins who die before having undergone the temporal punishment due to them? — 5. What advantage does the penitent derive from the satisfaction which he is obliged to make? — 6. By what works may we repair the injury done to God and our neighbor?

SECTION IX.

Of Indulgences.

An indulgence is a remission of the whole or part of the temporal punishment which ordinarily remains due to sin after the guilt of it has been remitted. It discharges, either entirely or in part, from the rigorous penances required by the ancient canons, and from the temporal

chastisement due to sin, in satisfaction to the divine justice, and which must be suffered either here or hereafter; in this life, by works of penance; or in the next, by the sufferings of purgatory. An indulgence, therefore, does not remit sin, nor the guilt of sin, nor the eternal punishment due to it, but only the temporal punishment which remains to be endured after these have been remitted. It either moderates the rigor of that temporary punishment, or shortens its duration.

In the early ages of the Church, public penances of many years' duration, were imposed on penitent sinners. They were obliged to pray much, to pass their days in mourning, and their nights in watching and tears, to lie upon the ground, to fast, to give alms, and to exercise themselves in other works of charity and religion. Although this ancient discipline is not at present enforced, yet, we should constantly remember, that the justice of God is the same now as it was in former ages, and that sin deserves punishment now as well as it did then. To supply the insufficiency of our satisfactions, the Church, always animated and directed by the spirit of God, grants indulgences to her children. She received this power from her divine Founder, when he said to his Apostles: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."* The Church, therefore, has power to inflict punishment, for the expiation of sin, and also to remit that punishment, when it is expedient for the glory of God, or the spiritual good of her children, by granting an indulgence. In the early ages she often, at the recommendation of the confessors and martyrs, treated with indulgence, those for whom they had interested themselves. She also, in times of persecution, abridged the term of penance for those who had commenced it with fervor, in order to strengthen them for the combat, and put them in a condition to resist the violence with which they were threatened. The infinite and superabundant merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the virtues and good works of his

* Matt., xviii, 18.

holy Mother, and of all the saints, are offered to God by the Church, in satisfaction for our sins.

Indulgences have been called by the holy Fathers, relaxations, remissions, absolutions, reconciliations. They are of three kinds: namely, *plenary indulgences*, *partial indulgences*, and the *indulgence of the jubilee*. A plenary indulgence is the remission of all the temporal punishment due to our sins. A partial indulgence is the remission of only a part of that punishment, according to the intention of the person who grants it, and the disposition of the penitent who receives it. A jubilee is an extraordinary plenary indulgence, granted by the Pope to all the faithful in general. It was formerly granted only once every hundred years; but it is now fixed to once in every twenty-five, besides that which usually follows the accession to the papal chair of each new pontiff.

The Pope, being the head of the Church, can grant indulgences to all the faithful, and as his power, in this respect, is unlimited, he can grant them plenary or partial, as he shall judge either proper or useful for the faithful. Bishops also, in their respective dioceses, can, under certain circumstances, grant indulgences of a certain limited time. All these indulgences are attached to the recital of certain prayers, or to the performance of certain good works, and they are gained by those only who are in the state of grace, and who comply exactly with the specified conditions.

It must not be supposed, that indulgences exempt us from penitential works; or that the intention of gaining them dispenses us from the obligation of doing penance. Indulgences, on the contrary, always suppose that we do a part of our penance, and are in a true disposition of performing it, should time and strength permit; for the Church grants indulgences to assist our weakness and to make up for the deficiencies of our penance, and not to dispense us altogether from its performance. It is for this reason, no doubt, the Council of Trent declares, that according to the ancient and approved custom of the Church, indulgences should be granted with reserve and moderation; and that the Church, in granting them, ob-

likes those who wish to gain them, to fast, pray, give alms, or perform other good works.

A person who had, in his youth, committed many sins, but who was afterwards converted, and became remarkable for his piety, recited, every day, with great exactness, a number of prayers to which indulgences are attached. He also practised, every day, some voluntary mortifications, and gave alms to the poor proportionate to his station and circumstances, repeating frequently these beautiful words : " Lord grant me mercy now, and at every moment of my life, but particularly at the hour of my death. Grant it, I conjure thee, through the merits of my Lord Jesus Christ, and the intercession of 'the Blessed Virgin, and of the angels, and saints. I offer thee, in the spirit of penance, all my actions and sufferings ; and desire nothing but the accomplishment of thy ever adorable will." When it was represented to him, that the mortified life which he led, might possibly injure his health, and shorten his existence, his reply was: " It is better to suffer a little in this world, than to suffer much in the world to come."—CATECHISME DE L'EMPIRE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is an indulgence ? — 2. Does an indulgence remit sin, the guilt of sin, or the eternal punishment ? — 3. What is the spirit of the Church in granting indulgences ? — 4. How many kinds of indulgences are there ? — 5. Who have power to grant indulgences, and what must be done to obtain them ? — 6. Why do not indulgences exempt from doing penance ?

CHAPTER VI.

Of Extreme Unction.

God, who is infinitely good, has not only prepared for us salutary helps during life, and whilst in the state of health, but has also established a sacrament to comfort us in sickness, and, particularly, at the approach of death, for it is then that temptations are most violent and dangerous. This sacrament is called *Extreme Unction*, because it is the last anointing which a Christian receives. The first anointing

takes place in Baptism ; the second, in Confirmation ; and the last, in dangerous sickness. Jesus Christ has instituted Extreme Unction for the spiritual and corporal strength and comfort of the sick. The Apostle St. James speaks of it in the following terms : " Is any man sick among you ? Let him bring in the Priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man ; and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."* According to these words, two things are essential to this sacrament ; the anointing, and the prayer which accompanies it. The anointing is done with holy oil, which is blessed by the Bishop on Holy Thursday. It is applied to each of the senses, to purify it from the sins of which it may have been the organ and instrument, the Priest pronouncing at the same time the following prayer : " May the Lord by this holy Unction, and by his own infinite mercy, pardon thee all the sins which thou hast committed by the eyes, the smell," &c. This prayer is most powerful and efficacious, since our Lord has promised, by the mouth of his Apostle, that he will always hear it.

This sacrament has three principal effects. The first is, to fortify the sick person against the temptations of the devil, and the terrors of death. It confirms his faith and confidence in God, and, by this means, it strengthens him against the attacks of the devil ; it excites in his heart the desire and hope of possessing God, and this fortifies him against the fear of death. The more ardent this desire is, and the firmer this hope, the less the fear which the soul experiences when the hour of death approaches.

The second effect of Extreme Unction is, to efface the remains of sin, and even sin itself, if any still remains to be pardoned. By the remains of sin, we are to understand that weakness and languor which remain in the soul even after the guilt of sin is pardoned, and which cause it to have still an inclination for the things of earth, and little relish for those of Heaven. This weakness and languor are

* James, v, 14, 15.

removed by means of this sacrament, by detaching the soul from earthly things, and replenishing it with an ardent desire for the enjoyment of Heaven. It also remits venial sins, and even mortal ones which may have been forgotten, or which the sick person may not be able to confess ; provided, however, that he have a sincere sorrow for them. But it is necessary, whenever it is possible to do so, to have recourse to the sacrament of Penance, Extreme Unction being a sacrament of the living, and therefore to be received in the state of sanctifying grace.

The third effect of this sacrament is, to restore the sick person to health, if it be conducive to his everlasting salvation. The receiving of it should, therefore, not be postponed to the last moments of life : for, surely, it is not the time to expect restoration to health when a person is on the point of breathing his last. This would be like tempting God, since recovery could not then take place without an evident miracle. It is sufficient to be dangerously ill in order to receive Extreme Unction ; and while the mind remains unimpaired, the sick person is better disposed to receive it, and to profit of its advantages. In deferring it to the last moment, one runs the risk of not receiving it at all ; for many who thus delay, are overtaken by death before it can be administered. Although this sacrament is not absolutely indispensable, a person is, notwithstanding, obliged to have recourse to it, when he can do so. It is the ordinary means of obtaining a happy death ; those who neglect to receive it, disobey the precept of Jesus Christ : they voluntarily deprive themselves of the graces annexed to it, and, by so doing, put themselves in danger of a bad death, which is the greatest of all possible misfortunes.

A man who lay dangerously sick, had an only daughter, a child not more than ten years old, who had learned her catechism very well, and was instructed in the truths and practices of our holy religion. She stood by the bed-side of her dying father, and seeing no preparation for his receiving the sacraments, she said: " Father, you are very sick : the doctor has said you shall not live longer than to-morrow:

and mamma has since been weeping bitterly in the next room. Now, I have heard at instructions that it would be very sinful to leave the sick to die without confession, and yet no one speaks to you about it. Do, father, do send for the Priest." Affected by the artless simplicity and the earnestness with which these words were uttered, the dying man said: "My dear child, I thank you; go for him at once, and may God bless you; for to you, under God, I am indebted for my salvation." The Priest came, and administered the last sacraments to the sick man, who died on the following day. Frequently did he repeat before his death: "Oh, were it not for my child, my dear little child, what would have become of me?" How consoling to her during life, to reflect, that she had been the instrument of so much happiness to her dying parent!—LASAUSSE.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is Extreme Unction? — 2. What two things are essential to this sacrament, and in what do they consist? — 3. What are the principal effects of Extreme Unction? — 4. When should this sacrament be received, and of what do persons deprive themselves who neglect its reception?

CHAPTER VII.

Of Holy Orders.

The five sacraments treated of, are common to all the faithful, and all ought to receive them in the times and circumstances in which these helps are necessary for them. The two others are for two particular states of life, which, on account of their importance, and the duties they impose, have need of many powerful graces. The sacrament of Orders gives pastors to the Church, to rule and govern it. By the imposition of hands, and the prayers which accompany it, they are separated from the rest of the faithful, and receive the power of preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, offering the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and in a word, of exercising the functions of the sacred ministry. Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament when he selected his Apostles, and said to them: "As the

Father hath sent me, I also send you; * Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; † Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained; ‡ and also when, after having instituted the sacrifice of his body and blood, he added, "Do this for a commemoration of me." §

Holy Orders is a sacrament, which gives the power to perform ecclesiastical functions, and grace to exercise them with sanctity. The Apostles received, together with this power, full authority to communicate it to others. We learn from the Holy Scriptures, that they ordained Bishops, Priests, and deacons, by the imposition of hands; and from Ecclesiastical History we learn, that the first Bishops ordained by the Apostles, ordained others to succeed themselves, and this succession, which has never been interrupted, will continue in the Church to the end of the world.

A person is raised to the dignity of the priesthood by different degrees, or orders. Four of these are called *minor orders*; namely, *porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte*; and three are called *major or holy orders*; namely, *subdeacon, deacon, and Priest*. A state so holy requires corresponding dispositions in those who desire to embrace it. The first of these dispositions is, that the person be truly called, and do not intrude himself into so sacred an office: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself," says the Apostle, "but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." ¶ We should embrace no state whatever without having consulted God, and endeavored to know his holy will; but this precaution is much more necessary when there is question of a state, the functions of which are so holy and sublime. "You have not chosen me," said Jesus Christ to his Apostles, "but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit." ¶ The second disposition is, to be animated with zeal for the glory of

* John, xx, 21.

† Matt., xxviii, 19.

‡ John, xx, 22, 23.

§ Luke, xxii, 19.

¶ Heb., v, 4.

¶ John, xv, 16.

God, and the salvation of the neighbor. Woe to those who enter this holy state through human views : who consult only their worldly interests or their ambition ; who propose to themselves but the acquiring of wealth, or to live more conveniently or with more respectability. The third disposition is, to be irreproachable in morals. It is much to be desired, that those who aspire to the ministry, should have preserved the grace of Baptism, or have, at least, for a long time previously, recovered it by penance, and led an edifying life. The fourth disposition is, to be in the state of grace, for it would be an awful sacrilege, indeed, to receive so holy a sacrament in the state of mortal sin.

The life and history of a Priest are briefly as follows. He is, by his office, the friend and protector of the unfortunate, the consoler of the afflicted, the defender of the defenceless, the support of the widow, the father of the orphan, the repairer of all the disorders and evils engendered by the passions and false doctrines of sinful men. His entire life is a long and heroic devotedness to the happiness of his fellow-creatures. For their service, he consents to exchange all the domestic comforts of life, all the enjoyments and goods which men seek so passionately, for the obscure labors, and fatiguing duties of a ministry, which often produce no other fruit than the ingratitude and insult of the libertine and the infidel !

While the world is still lulled in sleep, the man of God often anticipates the dawn, to commence his day of beneficent labor. He relieves the poor, visits the sick, dries up the tears of the unfortunate, and excites those of the penitent ; instructs the ignorant, strengthens the weak, and confirms in virtue souls agitated by the storms of passion or temptation. After a day filled up with such exercises, the night returns, but not always to bring repose to him. At the hour which leads the worldly votary to the theatre or to parties, a messenger is despatched for the minister of religion. A Christian, touched in his last moments with repentance, is about to expire, and, perhaps, of a contagious

disorder ; no matter,—the good shepherd will not suffer one of his flock to expire without alleviating his anguish, holding up before him the consolations of faith and hope, and praying by his side to the God who died for him, and who, at this instant, gives him, in the sacrament of his love, the most assured pledge of immortality. A Priest is the minister of Jesus Christ upon earth ; his representative, charged with the exercise of functions which have not been confided even to angels. Such is the Priest of God exercising his ministry in the midst of the faithful.

EXERCISES — 1. What difference is there, as regards all the faithful, between the first five sacraments and the last two ? — 2. When did our Lord institute the sacrament of Holy Orders ? — 3. What power does this sacrament confer ? — 4. Through what degrees must a person pass, to attain the dignity of priesthood ? — 5. What dispositions does a state so holy require of those who desire to embrace it ?

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Matrimony.

Marriage was instituted in the beginning of the world, when God gave man, for his companion, the woman whom He had formed from his side, and blessed her with fruitfulness. In order to render this first institution more holy, Jesus Christ has elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament, attaching to it a special grace to confirm this indissoluble union, and to sanctify those who are engaged in it. He has rendered it the image and sign of a great mystery, the intimate and eternal union which he has with his Church. Marriage is, then, a source of spiritual benedictions for those who receive it with proper dispositions.

Marriage is a sacrament which gives grace to sanctify those who are engaged in this holy state. It is a certain truth, that those who, being in the state of grace, and having consulted God, marry with Christian intentions, receive, by virtue of this sacrament, graces which sanctify them, and enable them to discharge faithfully the obligations of their state. Before a person decides on embracing this state, he should be careful to pray fervently to God for grace to

know whether he has been called to it. Without this, he might rashly, and contrary to God's will, contract an engagement which God would not bless, and which would expose his salvation to great danger. God never fails to make known his will to those who invoke Him with sincerity and earnestness. Persons about to engage in the married state, should also consult their parents. Parents have at heart the interests of their children, and know better than they do the means by which they can be promoted. Children should, therefore, follow their advice, rather than a blind inclination, in an affair so important, and on which their happiness for time and eternity is so dependent.

There are three principal dispositions for receiving the sacrament of Marriage. The first is that the conscience be purified from every mortal sin; because Marriage is a sacrament of the living, which supposes the spiritual life of grace in those who receive it. The Council of Trent exhorts those who desire to enter into this holy state, to approach the Holy Eucharist, in order to draw upon themselves the blessing of Heaven. The second disposition is, to receive it with the intention of doing the will of God, and of serving Him in this state. We should propose to ourselves to please God in all things, even in our least actions: with much more reason, then, in an engagement which will continue until the death of either party. "We are the children of saints," said young Tobias to Sara, "and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God."* He who believes himself called to the married state, should be careful not to enter it but with a view to sanctify himself, and to fulfil all its obligations. The third disposition is, to receive it with modesty and all the other virtues suitable to the sanctity of this sacrament, avoiding with care everything contrary to the rules of strict propriety. To receive the nuptial benediction with levity, would be to offend God at the very foot of his altar, and profane a sacrament which should be approached with much piety and religion.

Married persons have four obligations to fulfil: namely, to live together in perfect union and harmony; to live

* Tobias, viii. 5.

with fidelity to each other ; to render mutual assistance in their respective wants ; and to give their children a Christian education, accustoming them in their tender years to pray to God, and to perform piously the other duties of religion ; teaching them, and repeating frequently to them, the maxims of the Gospel ; giving them good example, and watching over their conduct, in order to remove from them everything which might lead them to sin, and cause them to sacrifice their eternal happiness.

A young physician, who resided in Paris, made proposals for a young lady of that city, and was promised her hand in marriage. A short period before the time appointed for the intended ceremony, he called at her house, and on seeing her mother, told her that he desired an interview with the lady destined to be his future wife. On being questioned as to its object, he frankly replied, that he had been trained from childhood, as the family were aware, in the practice of his religious duties, and that he was desirous that he and the young lady should each make a general confession and approach the Holy Communion, previous to the intended marriage, that they might receive, with the nuptial blessing, the graces which are attached to it. The mother, overjoyed at this pious determination, addressed him in the most affectionate terms, and congratulated herself and daughter on the dispositions which the young gentleman manifested, and on the happiness of which it could not fail to be productive. She pressed him to the interview with her daughter, and to the communication of his wishes. The young gentleman did not confine himself to this. He had the holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for eight successive days previous to the marriage ; and, on the morning of the appointed day, nothing could be more affecting than to see this young couple approach the holy table ; the one, accompanied by his father and mother ; the other, by her mother and grandmother ; when all received the Holy Communion from the hands of the Priest who was afterwards to bless their marriage. What an in

structive example for young persons ! What a lesson for so many negligent and disedifying parents ! If all marriages were celebrated like this, they would be followed, without doubt, by tranquillity and happiness.

EXERCISES — 1. When and by whom was marriage instituted ? — 2. To what dignity has Jesus Christ elevated marriage ? — 3. What should persons do before they decide on embracing the marriage state ? 4. How many dispositions are necessary for the worthy reception of the sacrament of marriage, and in what do they consist ? — 5. What are the obligations of married persons ?



PART SECOND.

OF PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

OF PRAYER IN GENERAL.

SECTION I.

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

Prayer is the second means by which we can obtain the grace of God. It is an elevation of the mind and heart to God, to render Him our homage, and to beg of Him all necessaries for soul and body. It is an indispensable duty, and cannot be omitted without sin, for Jesus Christ himself expressly commands it: "Watch ye and pray."* "We ought always to pray, and not to faint."† Hence the reproach which he made to his disciples; "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive."‡ He practised himself what he commanded; he passed whole nights in this holy exercise, or rather, his whole life was a continual prayer. Jesus Christ had no need of prayer for himself, but he wished to leave us an example, and engage us thereby not to neglect so powerful a means of sanctification. We required this example to stimulate us to the discharge of this essential duty. Salvation is promised to those only who pray; and such as persevere in prayer will obtain it. Prayer is, therefore, an indispensable duty; and even if the Scripture contained no positive law requiring us to pray, the mere consciousness of our own miseries would alone be sufficient to prove its necessity.

* Matt., xxvi, 41.

† Luke. xviii. 1.

‡ Jehn, xvi, 24.

Do not the ills of soul and body, continually springing up, admonish us incessantly to have recourse to Him who alone can remedy them? Is it not the part of the miserable to weep and solicit assistance? Our misery is extreme; the goods which we want are of infinite value. God is ready to grant what we require; and He not only permits, but even commands, us to ask for them. He is not ignorant of our wants; He knows them better than we ourselves; but He requires us to lay them before Him, that we may desire more ardently the gifts He has prepared for us, and may, by this desire, be more capable of receiving them. The desire of eternal goods becomes more ardent by prayer: the greater the desire is, the more abundant is the succor we receive from God. He fills the hungry with good things; but He sends away empty those who imagine themselves rich, and to be in need of nothing.* If God bestowed his gifts without awaiting our prayers, we would attribute these gifts to ourselves; but when, after having felt our weakness and misery, we have recourse to Him, we then recognize our dependence; we are obliged to acknowledge that we can do nothing without Him, and that all we receive are gifts of his pure liberality. This humble avowal of our poverty disposes us to receive his benefits in abundance. We should, then, apply ourselves to this holy exercise, and not think that we fulfil this essential duty by employing in its performance a few moments only, and passing the rest of our time without thinking of God. St. Liguori says: "that he who prays, shall infallibly be saved, and that he who does not pray, will inevitably be lost." We should have frequent recourse to prayer, and persevere a long time in it. God wishes to be solicited, pressed, importuned; He is not weary of hearing us; the treasure of his graces is infinite; and we can do nothing more agreeable to Him, than to beg, incessantly, that He bestow them upon us. Earthly monarchs do not permit all their subjects indiscriminately to address them; this is a favor which they grant only to their favorites, and at certain times. It is not thus with God; He permits us to speak to Him at every hour,

* Luke, i. 53.

to present our wants, and implore his assistance ; He even commands us to do so with perfect freedom, and is offended if we present not ourselves before Him. What an honor for a vile creature thus to approach his God, and to communicate to Him his thoughts, his desires, his necessities, with a holy liberty, and with a sweet and assured confidence! Would it not be a contempt of his goodness not to profit of the favor which He grants, in promising to hear us, and to interest himself in everything that can promote our real happiness?

“Prayer,” says St. Teresa, “is the gate through which the graces of the Lord pass. If this gate be closed, what will become of us? Alas!” she adds, “I have had sad experience of it. I had the misfortune to give up the practice of mental prayer, and I became every day more negligent and less devout. Had I not returned to this holy exercise, I would have been lost.”

David, although placed upon a throne, and occupied with the affairs of his kingdom, was accustomed to pray to God seven times in the day, as he himself informs us ; he even rose in the night to pray. Inspired by the spirit of God, he composed the Psalms, which are still used in the Church, and form part of the daily office of the clergy and religious.

Several great princes, such as Charlemagne, St. Louis, and the Emperor St. Henry, observed religiously the practice of reciting daily the office of the Church ; they also arose in the night to assist at matins.

An author who cannot be suspected of partiality to Christian practices, and who wrote under the influence of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, at a time when it was yet novel, and most violent in its hatred of Christianity, makes the following reflection:—“When the ancient Romans sat down to table, the master of the house took a cup of wine, and sprinkled some drops of it on the floor, as a homage to divine Providence. At all times,

Christians, before and after meals, prayed to God, to thank Him for the repast of which they were going to partake, or which they had just taken. Is it not very censurable, and, at the same time, very ridiculous, that in France, for the last fifty years, this act of gratitude, so natural and so religious, is regarded by the great as a puerile ceremony, a low custom, which modern manners ought to proscribe? Our inferiors, in accustoming themselves to act ungratefully towards God, will soon act towards ourselves in like manner."

EXERCISES. — 1. Explain the second means by which the grace of God may be obtained. — 2. By what words does our divine Lord command the exercise of prayer, and what example has he given us of it? — 3. What renders this exercise so necessary? — 4. Is it sufficient to give but a few minutes to prayer? — 5. What says St. Liguori of the necessity of prayer? — 6. Does God not become wearied of hearing our repeated requests?

SECTION II.

Of the Efficacy of Prayer.

The efficacy of prayer is a truth which is repeated in almost every page of Holy Writ: and the promises of our Lord, to all who invoke his aid, are formal. "Cry to me, and I will hear thee."* "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee."† "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."‡ "All things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you."§ He is not satisfied with saying that our prayers will be heard when offered with due dispositions; he solemnly avers it. "Amen, amen. I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it you."¶ In fine, to dissipate every doubt that might possibly arise, he makes use of a comparison, capable of animating the most desponding. "What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? or if he

* Jer., xxxiii, 3.

† Ps. xlix, 15.

‡ Matt., vii, 7

§ Mark, xi, 24.

¶ John, xvi, 23.

shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?"* After promises so formal, we must have lost our faith if we doubt of the efficacy of prayer. If we confide in the promises of a good man, how much more ought we confide in the promises and asseverations of our Lord and Master, who is truth itself! To give diffidence entrance into our heart, would be to do Him an injury. Whence can this diffidence come? Is it from our own unworthiness? But is not the goodness of God towards us purely gratuitous; and is not the very avowal of our misery a new title to gain access to that God, whose mercy the greatest crimes cannot exhaust, and who invites the greatest sinners to approach Him with confidence? Is it not in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray; and is not our unworthiness lost in his infinite merits? No, the prayer of the humble sinner has never been rejected; it elevates itself to the throne of God, and infallibly attracts his mercy down to him who prays.

Is there any one, says the prophet, who has invoked the Lord, and has been despised? Our fathers cried to the Lord, and they were delivered; they hoped in the Lord, and they were not confounded. Whoever invokes the name of the Lord, shall be saved. This full, entire, and unbounded confidence in God does Him honor. It is a homage rendered to his goodness, mercy, and fidelity. Prayer obtains everything; God can refuse it nothing. "Who hath called upon Him," says the Wise Man, "and He despised him?† "Every one that asketh," says St. Jerome, "receiveth," Moses prayed on the mountain, and the enemies of God were vanquished; Judith prayed, and her country was delivered; the devout King Ezechias prayed, and God revoked the decree of his death; the publican prayed in the temple, and he was justified; the penitent woman prayed, and her sins were forgiven: the good thief prayed upon the cross, and, although guilty of enormous crimes, yet he obtained pardon. Hence, St.

* Matt., vii, 9, 10, 11.

† Eccclus., ii, 12.

John says: "And this is the confidence which we have towards Him: that, whatsoever we shall ask according to his will, He heareth us: and we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask."*

Let us not allege our weakness when we are exhorted to practise virtue; let us not say, that our inclination to evil drags us along, and that we have not strength to resist the violence of our passions. "Being able to procure by humble prayer," observes St. Liguori, "the divine aid, which will enable us to do all things, we are inexcusable if we yield to temptation." We can pray, and prayer will sustain our weakness; we can pray, and prayer will strengthen us against our evil inclinations; we can pray, and prayer will moderate the violence of our passions. "But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."† We never fail to obtain of God the succors which we ask for as we ought; or if we do not obtain them, it is always through our own fault: it is because we have not recourse to God with sufficient confidence.

St. John Chrysostom does not hesitate to say that prayer is, in a manner, more powerful than God himself: by this he means, that its power is such, that it causes God to yield, and not to put in execution the sentence which He has pronounced against us. His conduct with regard to the Israelites is a striking example of this. They had transgressed the law of the Lord, and had set up a golden calf to adore it. God, always clement, seemed, as it were, to fear the prayer of Moses in their behalf. "Let Me alone," said He, "that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them."‡ Moses, however, continued to pray, and God, overcome by his importunity, did not execute that threat which He had pronounced against his people.

* 1 John. v. 14. 15.

† James, i. 5.

‡ Exodus, xxxii, 10.

EXERCISES. — 1. What is the power of prayer, and where shall we find the pr. of thereof? — 2. Give us some examples illustrative of the power of prayer.

SECTION III.

Of the Conditions of Prayer.

To reap from prayer the admirable fruits derivable from it, it must be made with the necessary conditions. Our prayer, to be acceptable to God, must be offered *in the name*, and *through the merits*, of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has not promised to grant us what we ask, except in his name alone; and, therefore, the Church concludes all her petitions with these words: *Through Jesus Christ our Lord*. We must, secondly, pray with *attention*; that is, think of God, and of what we ask. God attends more to the words of the heart, than to those of the mouth. Prayer being an elevation of the soul to God, we cannot be said to pray when we think of everything but of God, and of what we say. It is true, that distractions, when involuntary, do not render our prayers bad; but God is offended by those to which we willingly give occasion, or which we do not reject as soon as we perceive them. They who pray with wilful distraction, merit the reproach which God formerly made to the Jews: "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."* We must, thirdly, pray with *humility*, conscious of our unworthiness, weakness, and misery; for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."† "The Almighty," says St. Liguori, "does not hear the supplications of the proud, who trust in their own strength, but leaves them to their own weakness and misery, which, when they are abandoned by divine grace, will infallibly lead them to perdition." Those who are penetrated with a sense of their own wants, insufficiency, and nothingness, will, in times of temptation and affliction, have recourse, by humble prayer, to the divine aid, without which they can do nothing, and with which they can do all things. God is ever ready to hear the prayers of the

* Matt., xv. 8.

† James. iv. 6.

humble. "The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds : and he will not depart till the Most High behold."* We must fourthly, pray with *confidence*. Our Lord's promise of hearing our prayers is always accompanied with this condition, that they be offered with faith. He ordinarily said to those who presented themselves to him to be cured, "According to your faith, be it done unto you."† Our confidence cannot be too firm, since it rests on the power of God, which is infinite ; on his mercy, which has no bounds ; and on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, and by whose merits we hope to be heard. We address ourselves, with confidence, in our temporal wants, to a powerful and tried friend ; and yet we fail to address ourselves to God in even our spiritual wants, although He commands and invites us to have recourse to Him, as to a good father. Is not such a procedure injurious to his tenderness ? What is the goodness of man, when compared with that of God ? We must, finally, pray with *perseverance*. God, infinitely good and wise in all things, sometimes defers granting what we ask ; this delay is not a refusal, but a trial. He desires by this, to make known the value of his gifts, to increase the ardor of our desires, and to dispose us to receive them with more abundance. We ought not to be discouraged, nor cease from praying. Our Lord himself commands it, and to make us feel the necessity of perseverance, he presents us with two comparisons. The first is that of a widow, who, by her importunity, touched the heart of an unjust judge, and forced him at last to do her justice. The second is that of a man who came in the middle of the night, to borrow three loaves from a neighbor, who, being in bed, refused to give them. But the man was not disheartened ; he continued to knock at the door ; he redoubled his entreaties : at length his perseverance was recompensed ; he obtained what he desired. Our Lord concludes this parable by a lively and pressing exhortation to pray without ceasing, and by a formal promise to grant all that we ask with perseverance. The moment in which we cease to pray, is perhaps, the very one

* Eccles.. xxxv. 21.

† Matt. ix. 29.

in which God had determined to hear us. Remember well this important truth. *by prayer we ask, but by perseverance we obtain.*

A virtuous and interesting little boy was accustomed to offer his heart to God every morning, with great fervor, being mindful of our Lord's loving command, "Son, give me thy heart." This offering was, as it were, the soul of all his actions. "Whenever I fail in this duty," he used to say, "I feel dissipated during the day." He led a very holy life, and died at the age of twelve years, in sentiments of extraordinary piety. "My God," he often said, as he lay on his death-bed, ready to expire; "My God, I have almost every day of my life offered Thee the sacrifice of my heart; I now freely offer Thee that of my life."

If we imitate this pious boy, and, like him, be faithful in offering our heart to God every morning, we shall, like him, die in sentiments of true piety.—ARVISENET.

EXERCISES.—1. How many conditions should accompany our prayers? — 2. Why should we pray in the name of Jesus Christ? — 3. Why should we pray with *attention*? with *humility*? with *confidence*? with *perseverance*? — 4. What comparisons does our Lord present us which show the necessity of persevering in prayer?

CHAPTER II.

OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

SECTION I.

Of what we should ask of God.

Our Blessed Lord himself has taught us the things for which we are to pray, and the order in which we are to pray for them. He has been pleased to prepare that most excellent model of petition, called the *Lord's Prayer*, which, in his name, we are to present to his Eternal Father. "Jesus Christ," says St. Cyprian, "besides the salutary admonitions and precepts which he has given us, has prescribed a form of prayer for our use, that, addressing the

Father in the words of the Son, we may more readily be heard. Let us then," continues the holy doctor, "often use this divine prayer, which our Lord and Master has taught us. It is a prayer most agreeable to God, as ascending before Him in the words of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father, let us make use of the words of our Mediator, who says, that whatever we ask the Father in his name will be granted ;* and how much more willingly will He attend to our petitions when they are addressed, not only in the name of his beloved Son, but even in his very words !" This divine prayer is in continual use in the Church. With it she begins and concludes all her offices, and it is always said in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The faithful should say it every day, morning and evening ; and it would be very advisable to do so from time to time, during the day.

The Lord's prayer is composed of a short preface and seven petitions ; the first three of these petitions regard God, the last four relate to ourselves. It contains all that we can desire or ask of God ; it is the rule by which we ought to regulate our sentiments and our desires. We may use other words when we pray, but we cannot ask of God anything which this prayer does not contain. Every petition which cannot be referred to it, is unworthy of a Christian, and cannot be agreeable to God. The preface consists of these words : *Our Father, who art in Heaven.* Jesus Christ has expressed in these few words, all that is most capable of engaging God to hear our petitions, and of inspiring us with sentiments of respect, confidence, and love.

"We call God *our Father* ; Christ himself commands us to do so. God is, indeed, our Father by creation, having given us life and made us to his image ; and He is also our Father by the grace of regeneration, since, in Baptism, He adopted us in Jesus Christ, for his children. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God." † "Because you are sons," says St. Paul, "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba. Fath-

* John, xvi, 23.

† 1 John. iii. 1.

er." O name full of charms and sweetness! What love, what gratitude, what confidence, ought it not excite in our heart! If it is true that God is our Father, can you imagine that your prayer will be rejected, when you call upon Him by a name in which He takes so much delight? What will He not grant to one who prays to Him, after having been received by Him into the number of his children? Fear only to render yourself unworthy by your disobedience, of being called the child of God; for nothing else can stop the course of his graces, or the effect of your prayers.

Each one, in speaking of God, says *our* Father, and not *my* Father, because, being all children of the same Father, and hoping for the same inheritance, we pray, not only for ourselves, but also for all the faithful, who are our brethren; and moreover, that it is not in our own name that we pray, but in the name of Jesus Christ, and in union with the entire body of the Church, of which we are members. We add, *who art in Heaven*; for, although God fills all places by his immensity, we consider Heaven as the throne of his glory, where He manifests himself to the blessed in all his majesty and beauty. Heaven is our true country, the inheritance which our loving Father has provided for us. When, therefore, we pray, we should elevate our thoughts and desires thither, unite ourselves to the society of the blessed spirits, and excite in our heart the desire and the hope of one day possessing God for ever in his blissful region.

St. Francis of Assisium was disinherited by his father, on account of his great liberality to the poor; but the saint, filled with spiritual consolation, only observed, "Now I can, with greater confidence than ever, say: *Our Father, who art in Heaven.*" Oh, how truly great the nobility of a Christian! God himself is his Father!

A young shepherd had the pious custom of praying while he attended his flock in the interior of the country. Being asked, if he felt not lonely, and if his time did not

pass heavily in a place so removed from society, he replied, that his time passed quickly, and agreeably, too, by means of the *Our Father*, in which he discovered an exhaustless source of consoling thoughts and pious sentiments. Such, he said, was the delight which it afforded him, that to meditate on the entire prayer but once, would give him sufficient mental occupation for a whole week.

St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, having fallen sick, did nothing during the night but repeat the Lord's prayer. The servant who attended him, remarked that the constant recital of this prayer would increase his sickness. "You are mistaken," he replied; "the recital of so beautiful a prayer cannot do me the least harm; on the contrary, I find, that the frequent repetition of it, refreshes and improves me."

EXERCISES. —1 Which is the most excellent model of prayer, and who is its author? —2. How many petitions are there in the Lord's prayer? —3. Explain the preface of this prayer.

SECTION II.

FIRST PETITION.—"*Hallowed be thy name.*"

It is just that the glory of God should be the object of our first desire and our first petition. As children of God, nothing should be so dear to us as the honor and glory of our Father. We begin, then, by praying that his name may be hallowed, that is, honored and glorified. The name of God is holy in itself; it cannot acquire any new degree of holiness; but it is frequently dishonored by the language and conduct of men. What we ask by these words is, that the holy name of God may be known, praised, and adored, by all creatures; that every tongue may bless Him; that the whole universe may render Him the homage which is due to his sovereign Majesty; that his glory may be extended to all the nations of the earth. There are infidels who know not God; we beg of Him that they may be brought forth from the darkness in which they lie buried, and be

called to the admirable light of the Gospel. There are heretics who know God, but do not render Him a pure worship ; we beg that they may renounce their errors, acknowledge the truth, and enter into the bosom of the true Church, out of which there is no salvation. In fine, there are bad Christians, who do not serve God, who outrage Him by their sins, who profane and blaspheme his holy name ; we beg that they may be converted to Him by sincere penance, and may begin to glorify Him by their edifying conduct. We pray even for the just, who already honor the name of God by their virtues, that they may increase in justice, and persevere in it to the end. But what we ought chiefly to desire is, that we may ourselves sanctify the name of God, consecrate our whole life to his glory, and cause Him to be honored and glorified by others. We give glory to the name of God by our thoughts, by numbling ourselves profoundly before his divine Majesty, and by ever thinking of God, and of the things of God, with profound respect and religious veneration. We give glory to the name of God by our words, by never speaking of Him but with a feeling of interior adoration and of profound respect. We give glory to Him by our actions, by leading an exemplary life, calculated to conduct others to his service and love. In repeating this petition, *hallowed be thy name*, we ought to have a sincere desire of procuring the glory of God, as much as in our power, and of inclining others to honor Him,—inspiring them by our language and conduct with a love of virtue and a relish for piety. Without this desire, our heart would belie our lips, and our words bear witness against us, since we do not really wish that for which we pretend to petition. But what shall we say of those who, though they daily beg that God's name may be glorified, occasion others to offend his divine Majesty by their evil counsel and bad example ?

A dutiful son holds his father's name in benediction : his greatest pleasure is to hear him praised ; his greatest affliction, to see him despised. Such are the sentiments which a good Christian entertains for God. He is animated

with zeal for the glory of so good a Father ; he is afflicted at beholding the indifference of the lukewarm among Christians ; and is horrified at hearing the blasphemies of the wicked.

EXERCISES.—1. What is the object of the first petition of the Lord's prayer ? — 2. In saying *hallowed be thy name*, what grace do we beg for infidels ? for heretics ? for the just ? — 3. How do we glorify the name of God ? — 4. What desire should accompany this petition ?

SECTION III.

SECOND PETITION.—“ *Thy kingdom come.*”

By these words, *thy kingdom come*, we beg that God may possess a sovereign power over all his creatures. This sovereign power belongs necessarily and essentially to Him : we cannot withdraw ourselves from his empire. But there is another kingdom, a kingdom of grace, with which we must co-operate, and which depends on our own consent ; a kingdom entirely spiritual, in which the soul, anticipated and assisted by grace, obeys freely and willingly all the inspirations of God, conforming itself in all things and without reserve, to his good pleasure, executing with fidelity all his commands, and having no other rule of conduct than his law and ordinances ; a kingdom, in fine, wherein the heart gives itself to God, in order that he possess it entirely, govern it according to his good pleasure, and disengage it from every terrestrial affection, and from every human attachment. Such is the kingdom which we desire that God should establish in us at present. There is another kingdom, that of his glory, in which He has prepared for his elect an immortal crown, where He imparts himself to them, that they may possess Him for ever, bestows upon them all his riches and treasures, fills them with the abundance of his house, inebriates them with the torrent of its delights, and in which they shall reign with Him for ever and ever. Such is the kingdom which we desire should come. What we ask, therefore, by this petition is, that God may reign in our heart by his grace in this world.

and that we may reign with Him in the kingdom of his glory in the next. In repeating this petition, we ought to desire sincerely, that the kingdom of sin and of the passions may be destroyed in us ; that our mind, heart, and body, be entirely submissive to God ; and that He may be their sole Master and only Sovereign. If we are the slaves of bad habits, and subject to vice, we must weep over our unhappy servitude, desire sincerely to break our chains, and enter into the liberty of the children of God ; we must afterwards elevate our thoughts and desires above the earth, which is the place of our exile ; we must sigh after our true country, where, possessed of inexpressible delights, we shall reign with our Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity. This should be the object of our desires and hopes, the panacea of our pains, labors and afflictions. The life of man, though short, is filled with miseries. How can we be attached to so miserable a life, knowing that we are destined for one which is eternal ? How can we apprehend the separation from this mortal and corruptible body, which prevents us from seeing God, and enjoying the company of the blessed spirits ? What can be more advantageous to us than to leave this prison, to quit this visible world, in which we are exposed to so many dangers, beset with so many snares, and in which, at every moment, we run the risk of perishing ? A good Christian has incessantly before his eyes the recompense he expects ; he regards himself upon earth as a traveller ; he is already, by the liveliness of his faith and hope, a citizen of Heaven. Seated beside the river of Babylon he weeps bitterly at the remembrance of his true country, his heavenly Jerusalem ; he frequently raises his eyes towards the holy mountain, the dwelling of peace, where his inheritance awaits him, where Jesus Christ is to crown him, and render him eternally happy.

“ The loss of my goods,” said a martyr for the faith, “ is a trifling matter. No man can deprive me of Heaven, which is the true inheritance of the children of God, who, in a few

moments, will put me in possession of its inconceivable and never-ending happiness."

EXERCISES. — 1. What do we ask of God by the words, *thy kingdom come?* — 2. What ought to be our desire in repeating this petition?

SECTION IV.

THIRD PETITION.—“*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

To obtain from our heavenly Father the inheritance which He reserves for us, and the kingdom for which He has destined us, we must do his will. Our Lord himself admonishes us of this in the Gospel: “Not all who say, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but they who do the will of my Father.” The will of God is, that we do good and avoid evil; and it is this will which the prophet desires we should do, when he says: “Teach me to do thy will; make me walk in the way of thy commandments; give to my heart the relish of thy holy ordinances.” This divine will is manifested to us in the Commandments of God and of his Church, and in the admonitions of superiors. In saying, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*, we beg of God grace to observe his law, to obey the Church, and all those who have been charged to govern us; we desire that our obedience may be as perfect as that of the angels and saints in Heaven. There all obey God with promptitude, punctuality, and ardor. Is it thus we obey? Are we faithful in obeying God’s commandments? Are we submissive to those who hold his place in our regard? This prayer is sincerely made, only when the heart accords with the tongue; it would be telling a lie to God, to ask Him with the lips for that which the heart does not desire.

The will of God is the cause of all the events of this life, except sin; and all that happens in the world is regulated by it. We may resist the grace of God as we please; but to prayer, and to prayer alone, is it given, to affect the operation of his sovereign will. Our duty in regard to it is, to adore

it, to accept with resignation the evils which God pleases to send us, and to receive, as from the hands of a father, the chastisements with which He visits us. God permits these evils to happen to us, because He has designs of mercy on us. If He send us afflictions, it is because He desires to save us; He wishes that they serve to expiate our sins. It is, therefore, through mercy, rather than justice, that God punishes us in this life: this makes the Apostle say, that the Lord chastises whom He loves, and strikes whom He receives into the number of his children; and thus He acts as a loving father; for where is the child that is not corrected by his parents?

By these words, *thy will be done*, we also beg grace to support with entire submission, all the pains which it pleases God to send us, and that, whatever happens, we may be patient and resigned, and perfectly conformed in heart and mind to the designs of his holy providence. We cannot make this petition as we ought, without renouncing our own will, or without, at least, endeavoring to renounce it. Nothing is more advantageous to us than to subject ourselves to the will of God. Man is lost only because he prefers his own will to that of God; he can be saved only by preferring the divine will to his own. "Take away self-will," says St. Bernard, "and there will be no hell." Our Lord himself has given us the example of this perfect conformity to the will of God: "I came down from Heaven," said he, "not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."* And again: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."† The whole life of our Lord was, in fact, but the exact accomplishment of the orders of his heavenly Father. If he was born in a stable, passed his youth in humiliating obscurity, and his last years in the functions of a painful ministry, it was because his Father had sent him, and that he regulated all his actions by the orders he had received from Him. If, in fine, he died by the most ignominious of punishments, it was that the will of his Father, not his own, might be accomplished.

* John, vi, 38.

† John, iv, 34.

“Obey the emperors,” was the usual mandate of the judges to the martyrs of Christ; “Obey their edicts, or you shall be delivered to the lions, to the flames,” and so forth. “We also have a law,” was the reply of these generous combatants, “and this law is the will of God. It forbids us to adore idols, and requires that we remain firm in our faith, and faithful to our duty. You promise us the riches of this world, but these we despise: the only riches which we esteem or desire are the imperishable riches of Heaven.”

EXERCISES. — 1. What must we do to merit the inheritance promised us? — 2. What graces do we beg of God by saying the third petition? — 3. How are we to act in order to accomplish this divine will in the events of this life? — 4. What other grace do we beg by the words *thy will be done*? — 5. What example has Jesus Christ given us of conformity to the will of God?

SECTION V.

FOURTH PETITION.—“*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

After the first three petitions, which regard the glory of God, we pray for daily food for the body and soul. God is the Source of every good. It is He who provides for all our wants, both in the order of nature and that of grace. We are all in his sight as beggars, who possess nothing, but what we have received from his beneficent and liberal hand.

The rich themselves are obliged to beg each day their bread, to acknowledge that they have received from the hand of God, whatever they possess; that they hold it from his liberality; and that they would lose it in a thousand ways, if He did not mercifully preserve it for them. Remark, that we do not ask of God superfluous riches, nor wherewith to satisfy our sensuality and pride, but only our *daily bread*, that is, what is absolutely necessary for our subsistence, according to our state; and we ask it only for the present day, for our Lord forbids us to be solicitous about to-morrow, which we may not live to see; He wishes that we rely on his providence, and that we

daily have recourse to Him, well assured that we have a good Father, always equally ready to grant to his children whatever is necessary for them. "Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."* This confidence in Providence ought not, however, to be idle or presumptuous. God does not wish to favor sloth; but He orders us to do all that depends on us, and, when we have done so, to confide entirely in Him, and to reckon upon the inexhaustible treasures of his providence. The manna was given day by day to the Israelites in the desert, and during forty years it was never even once withheld. Thus far as regards the wants of the body.

We have also a soul, which needs spiritual nourishment; and it is this bread of the soul for which we principally ask in this petition. It consists in the word of God, his grace, and the Holy Eucharist.

The word of God nourishes the soul. It preserves the just, and makes them advance in justice; it heals sinners, and leads them back to the life of grace which they had lost; it is the ordinary means that God employs for imparting and augmenting the knowledge and love of the truths of salvation. We should never neglect to hear the word of God, and when we do hear it, we should do so with respect, and a sincere desire of profiting by it.

Grace is as necessary for the life of the soul, as material bread is to preserve the life of the body. Grace sustains and strengthens the soul, and enables it to act. We stand continually in need of its assistance; and God wills that to obtain it, we pray for it daily and with great earnestness.

In fine, the Holy Eucharist is the nourishment of the soul. Jesus Christ himself assures us of it: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you;" "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever."† The primitive Christians received this heavenly bread every day. It would be desirable that the Christians of our times fol-

* Matt., vi, 34.

† John, vi.

lowed their example, for our soul becomes languid, and must finally die, if deprived of this heavenly aliment; but as the heart must be pure to receive it worthily, we beg of God each day, when we offer this petition, to give us that purity of heart, necessary for receiving with fruit this most precious treasure.

King Solomon prayed to God that He would give him neither poverty nor riches; not poverty, lest he might yield to temptation, and offend Him; nor riches, lest he should be puffed up with pride, and imagine he wanted not God's assistance. He begged only what was necessary for the preservation of life, and that God would teach him, at the same time, from whose hand he received it, that thus he might be constantly incited to give glory to God, as his Sovereign Lord and Almighty Benefactor.

EXERCISES. — 1 Explain the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer. — 2. Why are we to ask only our *daily* bread? — 3. Does our soul need nourishment, and in what does it consist? — 4. How does the word of God nourish the soul? — 5. Is grace necessary to preserve the life of the soul? — 5. By what words does Jesus Christ assure us that he is the food of our soul?

SECTION VI.

FIFTH PETITION. — “*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.*”

A God so good, a Father so tender, ought to find in his children a perfect docility to his holy law, a constant and inviolate fidelity to all that He requires. Such should be the conduct of men with regard to God; yet they offend Him every day; the greater part abandon Him, violate his commandments in the most essential points, and outrage Him by the greatest crimes. The just themselves frequently fall into faults, which, as it were, sadden the Holy Ghost. They do not, it is true, commit grievous sins which kill the soul, and separate it from God; but they daily fall into venial faults which excite his displeasure. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us."* These are the words of the Apostle St. John. Our Blessed Lord, well aware of the weakness of human nature, imposes it as a duty on us to pray daily for the pardon of our offences ; nor would he have required us to do so, were he not desirous of granting our petition. But it is necessary that he who makes this petition, should acknowledge and regret his sins. Without contrition no sin whatever, either mortal or venial, can be forgiven ; and God pardons only those who, with a sincere regret for having offended Him, have a firm resolution of sinning no more. We must not, however, dispense ourselves from reciting this prayer, under pretext of not having this disposition. It is our duty to pray for it. In saying to God, *forgive us our trespasses*, we beg the grace of true repentance, to obtain thereby the pardon of our sins. Having this disposition, one is sure to be heard favorably, and of being soon perfectly reconciled to God.

But would it be just to expect that God would forgive us our offences, if we refuse to pardon those who have offended us ? Would it be reasonable to desire that God should treat us indulgently, and forget the injuries we have done Him, if we are desirous of avenging those which have been done to us ? We say daily to God, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us*. The pardon which we grant to others is the measure, then, of that which we ask of God for ourselves. If we pardon our neighbor, God will pardon us ; if we refuse to pardon him, we have no pardon to expect. To make this petition, and, at the same time, to nourish in our heart resentment against those who have offended us, we would say to God : "pardon me not, because I will not pardon those who have injured me ; revenge thyself upon me, for I desire to be revenged of them." Thus would we pass sentence of condemnation on ourselves, by praying that God should treat us as we treat our neighbor.

* 1 John, i, 8.

A certain nobleman, who had refused to pardon his enemy, was induced by St. John the Almoner to assist at his Mass in a private oratory. It being then the custom for all the assistants to recite the Lord's prayer aloud at Mass, the saint made a sign to his attendant to stop when he came to the words, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us*, so that only the nobleman's voice was heard. The holy Bishop soon afterwards, with great earnestness, thus addressed the nobleman: "My Lord! what have you said? You have just pronounced your own sentence! You have prayed that God would not forgive you, as you are resolved not to forgive your enemy!" The nobleman, affected by these words, prostrated himself before the altar, and declared that he forgave him. The reconciliation was speedily and permanently effected.

EXERCISES. — 1. Is it obligatory for us to pray daily for the pardon of our offences?—2. Why is this request included in the Lord's prayer?—3. According to what measure are we to obtain pardon for our offences?

SECTION VII.

SIXTH PETITION.—“*And lead us not into temptation.*”

That God should mercifully pardon our past sins is not enough; we require grace to preserve us from sin in future. We are every moment in danger of offending God, as we are continually beset with temptations, and therefore, we must have recourse to the divine protection, saying to God with fervor, *lead us not into temptation*. By this petition we beg that God, compassionately regarding our weakness, would shield us from temptations, or enable us to triumph over them. The world, the devil, and our own passions, conspire to destroy us. The world tempts us by its bad example, its language, and its maxims. The devil tempts us, by making impressions on our senses and imagination, which tend to suggest evil thoughts and desires. He leaves nothing undone to cause us to yield to his suggestions; and St. Peter says that he, “as a roaring lion, goeth about,

seeking whom he may devour."* In fine, concupiscence, that is, the strong inclination to evil, with which we are born, continually tempts us ; it pursues us wherever we go ; it is a domestic enemy, which furnishes the devil and the world with arms to attack us with more advantage. To be tempted is not a sin ; it is an occasion of merit when resisted ; but it is a sin to consent to the temptation. If, through fear of offending God, we repress the first emotions, which are excited in us, and if we constantly refuse to consent to the evil, there is no sin. Our resistance is even an act of virtue, which God will one day recompense ; but if, after having perceived the evil, we entertain it, or dwell upon it with complacency, then it becomes sinful, and renders us culpable. Although temptation is not in itself a sin, yet it is always exceedingly dangerous. We do not, however, pray God to exempt us entirely from it ; for temptation is inevitable in this life, which, as the saintly man Job says, is a time of warfare. The greatest saints have suffered its assaults. Even our Lord permitted himself to be tempted, that he might teach us the manner of resisting temptations, and obtain for us grace to overcome them.

What we ask, is, that we may not be abandoned in our temptations ; for our frailty is such, that the least of them would be sufficient to overpower us, if we were not assisted by the grace of the Almighty. To Him, then, we have recourse. We make before Him the humble avowal of our weakness ; we beg of Him to turn away from us those violent temptations to which we would yield ; and that in all those which He may be pleased to send us as a trial of our fidelity, He may deign to support us, and give us the strength necessary to obtain the victory. With the help and protection of God we have nothing to fear ; He is sufficiently powerful to enable us to overcome all our temptations, and even to turn them to our advantage. He will grant his assistance, provided we watch over ourselves, do not rashly expose ourselves to danger, and beg his help in temptations which are unavoidable. We shall not be left

* 1 Peter. v. 8.

alone in the combat. God himself will fight for us. "God is faithful," says St. Paul, "who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will even make with temptation an issue," (that is, a way to escape), "that ye may be able to bear."* God's word cannot fail: He has promised to deliver those who hope in Him, and to protect those who invoke Him. They shall be attacked, but nothing can injure them, so long as God is their refuge: He will give them victory over their enemies; and temptation, so far from injuring them, shall perfect them and confirm their virtue, in order that they may persevere to the end.

"The wound in thy side, Lord, is very great," said St. Philip Neri; "but if Thou restrain me not, I shall, by my infidelities, render it still greater" . . . "Lord," said another saint, "abandon me not to myself, or I shall assuredly perish." . . . "Where wast Thou, O Lord?" said St. Catherine of Sienna, after having suffered the assaults of a violent temptation,— "Where wast Thou, Lord?" "I was in the depth of thy heart, sustaining thee," He replied; "and it was I who gave thee so great a horror of the evil suggestions of thy enemy." . . . "Where art Thou, O Lord," exclaimed St. Anthony, "and why hast Thou abandoned me?" A voice replied: "I have been ever at thy side; I wished to be a spectator of thy courage. Because thou hast resisted, my help shall never fail thee."

EXERCISES. — 1. What do we ask of God by the sixth petition? — 2. Name the enemies that conspire to destroy us, and tell us the means they employ to succeed. — 3. Of what do we stand in need, to resist these assaults?

SECTION VIII.

SEVENTH PETITION.—"*But deliver us from evil.*"

We conclude this prayer by begging God to deliver us from evil; that is, from the miseries of this life, from the enemies of our soul, and from eternal damnation. To how

* 1 Cor., x, 13.

many evils are we not subject in this life ! How many are the afflictions that embitter it ! Sickness and pain afflict our body ; trouble, inquietude, and chagrin, attack our soul. It is with much reason that the Church calls this earth, *a valley of tears*. We do not ask to be set free from all our miseries, this privilege not being consistent with our present state ; what we ask is, to be delivered from those which would be occasions of sin, and injurious to our salvation. There is no true evil but that which puts an obstacle to our sanctification. If infirmities, poverty, calamities, are called evils, they can be so named only because they trouble the soul, expose it to temptation, repinings, and despair ; and because we have not sufficient virtue to support those afflictions without sin. The evils which we suffer patiently, so far from being prejudicial, serve to purify us, and contribute to our justification ; they are rather goods than evils ; and however painful they may be, they are, in the order of Providence, the punishment of sin, and a means of arriving at eternal happiness. “ Through many tribulations,” says the Apostle, “ we must enter into the kingdom of God.”* We are permitted to desire and to ask deliverance from these evils, provided we make this prayer with entire resignation to the will of God, and that we are disposed to suffer with submission, if He judge it useful or necessary to our salvation. In praying thus, and in persevering therein, we will find the true remedy for all our evils. God will mercifully hear us, and will either deliver us from those evils, or, what is much better, will enable us to bear them. We beg to be delivered from the enemies of our salvation, and particularly from the devil, our chief and most cruel enemy. This spirit of darkness, not content with having seduced our first parents in paradise, and having drawn upon their posterity a deluge of evils, ceases not to make war upon us, and lay snares for our destruction ; but God restrains his fury, and prescribes him bounds beyond which he cannot pass. In fine, we implore God to deliver us from eternal damnation, an evil which is both irreparable and eternal. In this abyss of evils,

* Acts, xi v, 21.

in this fatal eternity, it will be useless to pray for deliverance ; if once condemned, we must for ever bear the weight of the divine vengeance. In this eternity, there is no redemption to be hoped for, no happiness to be expected : but an assemblage of all evils is to be suffered, and suffered without relaxation or end. With what ardor, with what perseverance, ought we daily and hourly supplicate our heavenly Father to be delivered from these frightful and irremediable evils !

St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea, rather than commit sin, constantly resisted the unjust order of the Emperor Valens, an Arian, and a persecutor of the Catholics. Valens sent the prefect, Modestus, to Caesarea, with orders to prevail upon Basil, by threats or promises, to communicate with the Arians. The saint, being summoned by the prefect, came before him with a cheerful and undaunted countenance. Modestus, assuming a haughty air, said to the Archbishop : " What dost thou mean by opposing so great an emperor, whom all obey ? Art thou under no apprehension of feeling the effects of the power with which we are armed ?" " To what," replied the saint, " does this power extend ?" Modestus answered : " To confiscation of goods, banishment, tortures, and death." " None of these things," said the holy man, " give me the least uneasiness. He that has nothing to lose, is secure against confiscation. I am master of nothing but a few books and the rags I wear, for neither of which, I presume, you have any great desire. As to banishment, I know of no such thing in your power to inflict upon me, as I account not the country I now inhabit my own. Heaven alone is my true country. Little do I fear your torments ; my emaciated body cannot hold out long under them. Much less do I dread death, which I regard as a favor, for it will bring me the sooner to my Creator, for whom alone I live. I am ready to suffer everything rather than offend my God." The prefect, admiring the saint's intrepidity, withdrew, and going to the emperor, he said : " We are overcome :

Basil is above our threats. He fears only one thing, and that is sin."

EXERCISES. — 1. From what evils do we beg to be delivered by the last petition of the Lord's prayer? — 2. Are infirmities, poverty, and so forth, real evils, and what may they become if borne patiently? — 3. What is the sovereign evil from which we request to be delivered?

CHAPTER III.

THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.—“*Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*”

OF DEVOTION TO THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

The Blessed Virgin is, after God, the most worthy object of our homage. She was chosen, from all eternity, to be the living temple of the Eternal Wisdom, and the glorious instrument of man's salvation. By her august quality of Mother of God, she is elevated above all the angels and saints, of whom she is the Queen. The Church, therefore, renders her a homage which she does not offer to any other saint. Favored, from her Immaculate Conception, with gifts the most excellent and divine, Mary was a perfect model of all virtues, and the most holy of all creatures; and was, by a special privilege, exempted from every sin. Filled with benignity, she has for us the tenderness of a mother; we became her children when Jesus Christ gave her as a mother to St. John, and, in his person, to all Christians. She is, then, our Mother. What name more tender, more touching, more proper to inspire us with sentiments of boundless confidence in her, and to make us hope for necessary assistance from her! She is sensible of our miseries; her heart is feelingly alive to our wants, when we expose them to her with confidence. Never has any one, as St. Bernard assures us, invoked her aid, without feeling the effects of her protection. She is, particularly interested for the salva-

tion of youth. She knows their weakness and the dangers to which they are exposed ; she sees the fury with which the devil assails them, the snares which he lays for them, and the efforts which he makes to rob them of their innocence. She protects them in a particular manner, whenever they have recourse to her. A thousand examples might be given of persons preserved, through her intercession, from the perils of this dangerous period of our existence. To mention but one : St. Francis of Sales was, in his youth, delivered, by the assistance of this Queen of Virgins, from a dangerous temptation, with which he had been long tormented.

How powerful the intercession of the Blessed Virgin is, will easily be conceived, if we consider that she has before God all the privileges of a dear Mother ; her power is then unbounded, because the love of Jesus Christ for his blessed Mother is infinite. Her Son, who is almighty, can refuse nothing to the best and most tender of mothers ; he shares, if we may so speak, his authority with her ; no mediation or prayer can be so powerful as that of this favored being ; he has established her the arbitress of his treasures, and the dispensatrix of his graces ; and he wishes that we have recourse to her, that we may obtain them from him. We should, then, have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, with the confidence of a child casting itself into the arms of its mother. Let us have for her a tender devotion, and we shall always experience that no one implores her assistance in vain ; and let us invoke her in all our temptations and dangers. When darkness clouds the mind, or passion agitates the heart,—in perplexity, in trouble,—let us think on her ; let her name be on our lips, but still oftener in our mind, and she will console us in our afflictions, she will dissipate our doubts, calm our agitations, and sustain us in our weakness. If we are just, she will confirm us in virtue, and cause us to persevere and increase in justice, but if, unhappily, we are in the state of sin, let us, without delay, have recourse to this Mother of Mercy, this “Refuge of Sinners,” and she will reconcile us with her divine Son. If we implore her powerful intercession to

obtain the grace of a sincere conversion, she will ask for us those efficacious graces, by which we shall be released from the slavery of Satan, and restored to the happy liberty of the children of God. In whatever state of life we may be placed, let us contemplate the virtues which were conspicuous in her, particularly her ardent charity, profound humility, and inviolable purity; and endeavor to practise them after her example. In living thus, we shall be of the number of her true children, and she will be our Mother; and as long as we are under her protection, we shall be secure from every danger.

The most excellent prayer that we can address to the Blessed Virgin, is the "Hail Mary," which the Church so frequently uses, and often joins with the Lord's prayer. This prayer, so august in its simplicity, recalls to us the memory of the Incarnation. It contains, in a few words, the most perfect eulogy of the Blessed Virgin: it is calculated to excite our liveliest confidence, by reminding us of her influence, with God, and of the means she possesses for promoting our welfare and happiness. This prayer is called the *Angelical Salutation*, because it commences with the words in which the Angel Gabriel addressed the Blessed Virgin, when he announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation. "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women." These last words were repeated soon after by St. Elizabeth, in the visit which she received from the Mother of God, to which she added the remaining words of the first part of this prayer: the Church has added the "Holy Mary," or second part. In reciting this prayer, we ought to have the intention of thanking God for the mystery of the Incarnation, of honoring t^e Blessed Virgin, who has had so great a part in this mystery, and of testifying our confidence in her powerful intercession. With the same intention let us often devoutly recite the following:—"*Hail, Holy Virgin!* thou hast borne in thy chaste womb the Author of grace, and hast received of his plenitude a superabundance of grace, which has rendered thee the most perfect of all creatures. *The Lord is with thee* by a presence the most intimate; of thy substance

has his most pure body been formed. Thou hast been replenished with divine benedictions; Heaven and earth have united to *bless thee*. *The fruit of thy womb* is the source of all those blessings which are diffused throughout the world. *Holy Mary, Mother of God*, thou knowest our miseries, thou art sensible of our wants, *pray for us now*; obtain for us the grace of repentance, and those virtues of which thou hast given so bright an example, particularly, humility and purity. *Pray for us also at the hour of our death*. Remember, O Mother of God, though we are sinners, we are thy children; redouble, then, thy maternal tenderness and solicitude for us at that awful moment when time ends and eternity begins; sustain us in that last combat; fortify us against the terrors of death; let us expire while pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary; and presenting us thyself at the tribunal of thy divine Son, procure for us a favorable sentence. Amen."

A soldier recited every day seven *Paters* and *Aves* in honor of the seven joys and seven sorrows of the Mother of God. He became so attached to this pious practice, that he very rarely omitted it. If, after going to bed, he remembered he had not performed this devotion, he arose, and, placing himself on his kness, paid this tribute of respect to his good Mother. Being once placed in one of the foremost lines, fronting the enemy, while the army, drawn up in battle array, awaited the signal of attack, he remembered that he had not, on that day, said his accustomed prayers to the Blessed Virgin. He blessed himself, and commenced to recite them. Some of his comrades perceiving him make the sign of the cross, and seeing him at his prayers, began to make sport of him, calling him a poltroon and a coward. Others said he was a silly devotee. The soldier, taking no notice of their railleries, continued his prayers, which he had no sooner ended than the battle commenced. His comrades fell everywhere around him, some killed, others severely wounded; and of the whole company to which he belonged, this client of Mary was the only one who escaped unhurt. When the war was over, he received his discharge,

returned home, and ever after attributed his preservation, on that memorable day, to the Blessed Virgin's intercession. He never ceased to thank her for her protection, and to rejoice that he had retained the pious sentiments, with which, in his childhood, his parents had inspired him.—
MOIS DE MARIE.

The famous victory of Lepanto will be an eternal monument of the power of the Mother of God, and of her title to the appellation of "Help of Christians," since it is to her that Christendom is indebted for the miraculous victory which the Christians gained over the Turks in the year 1571. Selim, the son of Soliman, emperor of the Turks, having rendered himself master of the Island of Cyprus, came with a powerful army to attack the Venetians, promising himself nothing less than the empire of the whole Christian world. The holy Pope, St. Pius V, Philip II, of Spain, and the Venetians, united to arrest the career of the common enemy. Although their forces were far inferior in numbers to those of the Turks, yet relying upon the protection of the Mother of God, the Christians did not doubt of success in this glorious enterprise. Prayers for their success were offered throughout Christendom. The faithful repaired in great numbers to the church of Our Lady of Loretto, to implore the assistance of Heaven, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin; and Don John of Austria, general of the army, made a vow to go in person to visit this sanctuary. The Christians obtained what they asked; for the two fleets having come to an engagement on the 7th of October, the enemy lost in the battle, which lasted from morning until night, thirty thousand men, and above two hundred ships and galleys, besides ninety that were stranded. One hundred and sixteen pieces of great cannon, with two hundred and fifty-six smaller, and five thousand prisoners, fell into the hands of the Christians. Don John of Austria, as soon as the affairs with which he was charged permitted, went to Loretto, regardless of the rigor of the season, to fulfil his vow.

Pope St. Pius V, fully convinced that this victory was to be ascribed to the intercession of the Mother of God, in-

serted in her litany the words, "Help of Christians, pray for us," and instituted the Festival of the Rosary, as perpetual memorials of this great benefit. Gregory XIII afterwards transferred this festival to the first Sunday of October, which is therefore called "Rosary Sunday." HIST. ECCL.

EXERCISES — 1. Who is, after God, the most worthy object of our homage, and why so? — 2. Is the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin very powerful before God, and for what reasons? — 3. How should we have recourse to the Blessed Virgin? — 4. What is the most excellent form of prayer that we can address to the Blessed Virgin? — 5. Of what words is the *Angelical Salutation* composed?

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE HAPPINESS OF LEADING A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

It is but too ordinary to form an erroneous idea of a Christian life, and to regard it as melancholy, painful, and disagreeable. There can be no greater mistake, no greater injustice, than this wide-spread prejudice against virtue and piety. Young persons should guard particularly against this dangerous error, or undeceive themselves if they are already engaged in it. They should be convinced that happiness is the portion of virtue; and if they doubt it, let them listen to the Holy Ghost, who assures us in several parts of the Scriptures that justice, or the observance of God's law, is always accompanied with peace of soul, that delicious feeling which a good conscience produces; and, consequently, that virtue only, renders man truly happy. Wherever fidelity to the law of God is spoken of, peace, which is, in a manner, inseparable from justice, is also mentioned. The Scripture, in the most emphatic terms, promises him who is faithful to the law of the Lord, that his dwelling shall be in peace. Remark, it says not that he shall find peace, that he shall enjoy peace, but that his dwelling shall be in peace; he shall establish his abode in peace; he shall be, as it were, surrounded with its blessings, and this peace—profound and abundant—it compares to a river whose salutary waters shall never be dried up.

Hence, that pure and lively joy, that intimate, durable, and solid pleasure which the just experience. Happy, then, the man who loves, with all his affection, the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by the running waters bearing fruit and flowers in every season. This is the language of the royal prophet; and that of Jesus Christ in the Gospel is no less formal and positive. He declares, in the clearest and most distinct terms, that his yoke is sweet and his burden light; and that those who bear it, shall find peace of soul.

“Innocence,” says the eloquent Massillon, “is the source of true pleasure. Be not deceived by outward appearances. The external delights of the worldling are embittered by the most painful anguish of mind; and the external mourning of the just is sweetened by the most enlivening interior consolations. The ark of Israel in the desert was covered with skins, and exhibited a mean and uncouth appearance. In the same manner, the man of piety not unfrequently appears despicable in the eyes of the world; but were you to look into his interior, you would see that it is covered, like the ark, with the purest gold; you would perceive that it is filled with the glory of the Lord; you would be ravished with the sweetness of the perfumes of prayer, which constantly ascend from the inflamed altar of his heart; you would admire the silence, the peace, the grandeur, that reign there undisturbed; in a word, you would be convinced that the Lord has chosen it for his abode, and that it is his delight to dwell therein.”

It is, then, a truth, founded upon the word of God, that a Christian life is a happy one, and that there is no true, no solid happiness, but in observing his divine law. This truth is also proved by experience. We can cite an unsuspected witness, St. Augustine, who, before his conversion, had for many years lived in forgetfulness of God, and in the gratification of his passions. Being at length converted, see how he expresses himself in his *Confessions*: “My God, Thou hast broken my bonds; may my heart and tongue forever praise Thee, for having made me take up thy light

burden, and carry thy sweet yoke. How sweet on a sudden did it become to me to be without the sweets of those toys! and what I was before afraid to lose, I now cast from me with joy; for Thou, who art the true and sovereign sweetness, hast expelled them from me; and in lieu of them, Thou hast taken up thy abode in my soul, imparting to it pleasures sweeter than any known to flesh and blood; brighter than any light whatever, but more interior than any secret; higher than any dignity whatever, but not to those who are high in their own conceit. Now was my mind free from the annoying cares of the ambition of honor, of the acquisition of riches, and of weltering in pleasures, and my infant tongue began to lisp to Thee, my God, my true honor, my riches, and my salvation."

A life of sin and disorder is a cruel slavery, in which one is torn by continual inquietude; a virtuous life is, on the contrary, an unfailing source of tranquillity and consolation. We must, it is true, do violence to ourselves, and resist our passions; but this resistance costs little to the soul that loves God; the sacrifices which we make are amply compensated by the testimony of a good conscience, and by the hope of eternal happiness, which replenishes the soul with joy. The experience of St. Augustine is also that of all who serve God with fidelity. And are not we ourselves acquainted with many of those happy souls who are truly faithful in the discharge of all their duties? A pure and innocent joy, a simple and modest gaiety, accompany them everywhere. The serenity of their soul is depicted on their countenance; the profound calm which they enjoy, their peace of heart, are manifested in their exterior. Can we doubt that this calm, this peace, is the fruit of virtue? But why refer to others? Have you not experienced the happiness that attends the practice of virtue? Recall the period of youth, when, moved by divine grace, you humbly and penitently confessed your faults, and were admitted for the first time to the holy table; did you not taste how sweet the Lord is to those that love him? On that happy day, your heart, disengaged from its passions and pure in the divine sight, relished and thirsted after God alone.

What joy then inundated your heart ! What serenity filled your soul ! What sweet tears did you not shed ! How ardently you desired to continue always in that blissful state ! Make the acknowledgment with gratitude ; render this just tribute to religion, that you have never enjoyed moments so delicious, nor have ever spent a more delightful day. You then comprehended the force of this maxim : in virtue alone is happiness to be found ; then you were penetrated with sentiments like those which animated the prophet, when he said : *Yes, my God, a single day passed in thy house, is better than entire years spent in the tabernacles of sinners.*

If you have preserved these sentiments of piety, this holy relish of virtue, bless the Lord ; for you will easily comprehend what has been said on the happiness of a Christian life. If, on the contrary, virtue, which formerly possessed so many charms for you, appears now importunate and burdensome, lay the blame on your own infidelity in discharging its duties. Had you walked constantly in the way of God, you would have enjoyed unalterable peace. There remains for you one resource ; namely, to take a generous resolution of observing exactly the law of the Lord, and of overcoming your repugnances at the outset. Return to your Father : a sigh disarms Him ; a tear appeases Him. You will soon feel in your soul those interior consolations and ineffable delights which constituted your happiness in the days of your innocence.

Can any one be unhappy in serving Thee, my God ? Art Thou not the Source of every good ? No, Lord ; it cannot be ; for thy yoke is sweet and thy burden light.* Thou hast created us for thyself, and never shall we find rest till we repose in Thee. In vain do I seek happiness out of Thee ; and what else have I yet found but deceitful, perishable goods, which leave the heart empty ; or real evils, which fill it with bitterness and disgust ? Thou hast said, O Lord ! that "there is no peace to the wicked :"[†] cutting remorse, continual alarms, and consuming griefs are their only portion. He who carries iniquity in his

* Matt., xi, 30

† Isaias, xlviii, 22.

bosom, carries with it terror and perturbation. But how different the lot of a soul that serves Thee, my God! It is always tranquil, content, and happy. It has, no doubt, sacrifices to make, but the unction of thy grace renders these sacrifices easy and agreeable; it has pains to endure, but these pains are scarcely felt in the midst of the consolations Thou bestowest on him. My God, I no longer hesitate to embrace a life of virtue, persuaded that such a life is far sweeter than that which sinners lead. I will be faithful in observing thy holy laws, in the full confidence of attaining true happiness on earth, and that perfect felicity in Heaven, which Thou reservest for those who lead a truly Christian life.

At a time when purple fever raged in Paris, and carried off great numbers of the poor before they could be removed to the hospitals, the Priests of one of the parishes, not being sufficiently numerous to attend the dying, were obliged to call in the aid of the religious communities. A venerable Capuchin, who had offered himself for the service, visited a miserable dwelling, in which he beheld a victim of the contagion. He was an old man, stretched upon filthy rags; a little hay was his only bed, no attendants, no furniture, not even a chair; everything had been sold, in the commencement of his illness, to purchase food. On the wall hung a picture of Christ crucified; and at a little distance, the hatchet and saw with which, whilst in health, he had procured a livelihood. "Take courage, my friend," said the confessor to him; "God grants you a great favor; you are going to depart from a world in which you have had much to suffer." "What sufferings?" replied the dying man, in a voice scarcely articulate.—"You are deceived, reverend Father; I have never had occasion to complain of my lot. My crucifix has been my consolation in the midst of my labors; religion has been my happiness; I have, therefore, lived contentedly—poor, indeed, but always in health and in the fear of God, who has never left me destitute of necessaries. O Father! how amiable religion is! how precious the treasures which she comprises!—peace,

content, and unalterable happiness, are the portion of those who love her." The confessor, no less edified than astonished at sentiments so religious, gave God thanks, and then addressing the sick man, said: "Although your life has not been unhappy, you must be resigned to leave it. "Ah! Father," he replied, "we must all pass this way; and I have no desire save that of being united to my God, whom I thank with all my heart for life and all his other benefits. But, Father, I feel my death approaching; administer to me, if you please, the last sacraments." Having received them with sentiments of extraordinary devotion, he expired, leaving his confessor, and all who had the happiness of being present, in admiration of the effects which religion produces in hearts which are docile to the inspiration and calls of divine grace.

EXERCISES. — 1. What idea is frequently formed of a Christian life? — 2. Show the falseness of this idea. — 3. What promise does the Scripture make him who is faithful to the law of the Lord? — 4. What must be done to lead a truly Christian life?

"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."—1 Tim., i, 17.

END OF THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN.



APPENDIX.

CHRISTIAN POLITENESS.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

SECTION I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Politeness consists in ease and gracefulness of manners, united with a desire to please others, and a careful attention to their wants and wishes.

The Christian youth, at his entrance into society, should be well instructed not only in his religious duties, but also in those duties of politeness, without which virtue itself loses much of its influence, and learning, that respect to which it is so justly entitled.

Created to the image of God, and bound to imitate a Redeemer, each of whose actions was distinguished by meekness and affability; intended, also, to fulfil an important destiny on earth, the Christian should be animated with the most lively sentiments of benevolence towards men, while his conduct in their regard should ever be the faithful expression of his sentiments. If not possessed of that union of simplicity, meekness, and dignity, so characteristic of Christian manners, his deportment should, at least, be free from everything affected, rude, or repulsive.

Parents, and those charged with the important office of educating youth, should spare no pains to render their manners polite and engaging; and children, on their part, should not fail to correspond with every effort tending to their improvement in this department of their education. Both should remember, that in early life good habits can be most easily acquired, and that the impressions then received will most generally influence the conduct and manners in after-life. The precepts of a good education may, indeed, in some instances, seem to have been forgotten; they may appear to exercise but little influence on a young man's sentiments and conduct; but, it is not difficult to discern, even in the midst of his greatest irreg-

ularities and excesses, the good effects of those lessons of virtue and politeness which he learned in childhood.

This little treatise is intended to assist young persons in forming their manners in accordance with the rules of decorum and the received usages of civilized life. It is divided into two parts; the first treats of what relates to external appearance; the second contains instructions on the more ordinary actions of life; namely, rising, retiring to rest, meals, conversation, amusement, &c. All these require distinct rules and the most marked attention, that everything may be done in order, and that our daily actions, corresponding, in the motive and the manner of performing them, with the designs of God, may ultimately tend to the perfection of our being.

Cleanliness of person renders us agreeable to others; it promotes cheerfulness, and is an excellent preservative of health. It also bears a great analogy to purity of mind, and naturally inspires refined sentiments. These reasons alone should be sufficient to induce young persons to practise what they are taught on a subject of such paramount importance.

Sleep is necessary to our existence, but it should be taken at suitable times, and with due moderation; for, when it is either unseasonable or excessive, it becomes injurious to mind and body.

Food should be proportioned to our constitution and necessities. Excessive indulgence in its use, particularly if habitual, is displeasing to God, and is sure to be attended with sleepiness, stupidity, and loss of health. Children, particularly, require instruction on this matter, as, not foreseeing the evil consequences, they often yield to the present gratification of their appetite.

Man is born for society—to live and converse with his fellow-men. He should, therefore, in his conversation, in the visits which he receives and pays, and, finally, in all the circumstances in which he may be placed, know well all the duties which good-breeding, reason, and religion prescribe. These duties are, prudence in manners; circumspection in discourse; honesty of purpose; due regard for equals and superiors; patience and meekness in dealing with persons of peevish or unmanageable temper; uniform charity on trying occasions; a constant care to avoid wounding either the reputation of the absent by malicious calumnies or disadvantageous reports, or the modesty of those present by ill-timed praise or sickening adulation; an exact guard upon the eyes; a great restraint

on the tongue; and the flight of whatever might infringe, in the slightest degree, the sacred law of charity. Such is an abstract of the virtues to which, from infancy, the young should be trained by those to whose care they are entrusted. These virtues should be so deeply imprinted on the memory and heart, that they may be instantly called into action, as occasion may require.

Although man, without exception of rank or condition, is irrevocably doomed to labor, yet the Lord, ever equitable in his decrees, permits him to take the recreation necessary to recruit his strength and maintain his vigor. It should, however, be commensurate with his wants; for, were it to degenerate into sloth or dissipation, it would be opposed to the will of God and might, moreover, prove a fruitful source of sin. On a subject, therefore, so little understood by a perverse and sinful world, it is of great consequence to give detailed lessons to young people, who are naturally inclined to amusement and, but too frequently, want discretion and moderation in its use.

SECTION II.

NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES OF POLITENESS.

When Michael Angelo had been several days employed on a statue, giving what he termed a slight degree of grace to one limb and of energy to another, a gentleman remarked to him that these were trifles, and unworthy of so much attention. "Trifles, certainly," he replied; "but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." This observation may be fitly applied to politeness, which consists of a series of little things such as a look, the tone of the voice, a kind word, an obliging action, an air of satisfaction and of gratitude for kindness received, and a number of considerate attentions, which can be better felt than described. Though these, taken singly, may, perhaps, appear trifling; yet, in the aggregate, they form the characteristics of true politeness.

The source of true politeness is the heart, in which there must exist a great degree of good will to men, and a sincere desire to promote their happiness. Politeness, when practised in early life, becomes a habit, and its exercise, like that of other habits, will be easy and agreeable. It should begin under the paternal roof, and be cultivated in the daily intercourse of domestic life. There the passions, as they gradually arise, can be placed under due restraint; the

kindly feelings can best and most frequently be exercised, the constant interchange of good offices encouraged ; and the manners formed to gentleness and courtesy.

The child who, in the retirement of home, acts towards his parents with reverence and love, and towards his brothers and sisters with kindness and affection ; who seeks opportunities of rendering them little services, and feels regret when he cannot contribute to their comfort and happiness ; who never indulges anger, moroseness, or incivility, but is uniformly mild, amiable, and obliging ; will find it easy to act, on all occasions, towards others also with sweetness and affability. He, on the contrary, who is wont to act with rudeness and incivility in the bosom of his family, will never possess that amiable and generous disposition, nor those polite and engaging manners, which, in the intercourse of society, require to be unremittingly exercised.

It is mentioned of a certain prelate, remarkable for his meek and elegant demeanor, that, in the retirement of home, and in his intercourse with his domestics, he preserved, even in his least actions, the same meekness and courtesy which marked his conduct in public. Hence, he was never surprised, but on every occasion and in every place acted with such singular gracefulness and benignity, as commanded the respect and won the esteem of all who approached him. What a lesson for the young, to accustom themselves at home to the duties they must discharge abroad ; never to act rudely or ill-naturedly, nor suffer an unkind look, an angry or offensive word, to escape them ; and to be careful never to permit the charming familiarity of domestic life to degenerate, as it not unfrequently does, into neglect, rudeness, or incivility ! They should remember, that no courtesy, however great, can be sincere or lasting, if the love of God, and a view to Him, be not its primary object. He who, in early life, learns to regard God and his good pleasure in every act of kindness he performs, will gradually be strengthened in love for others, and will be prompted, even under discouraging circumstances, to render them a number of affectionate services.

There are two things extremely prejudicial to politeness, and which, if indulged, would prove fatal to its exercise. The first of these is *selfishness*. The continual preference of others ; the unremitting attention to please without embarrassing ; the self-government necessary to restrain the heart and tongue under circumstances of provocation ; the yielding with a good grace, to humors and caprices ; and the multitude of little sacrifices which politeness de-

mands, appear intolerable to him who never thinks but of self and its gratification, and who is a stranger to the delight that emanates from the consciousness of having communicated pleasure. To the generous mind, such sacrifices become sources of pleasure, and seldom fail to obtain many grateful returns from the objects of his attention.

The second is *moroseness of temper*. A cheerful disposition is one of the greatest blessings; it imparts sunshine wherever it appears. It not only contributes to the happiness of its possessor, but diffuses joy and happiness around him. How gloomy the condition of the house from which, through the angry, vehement, or dissatisfied disposition of some of its members, cheerfulness is entirely banished! Peace, union, and good feeling cannot be inmates of such a dwelling; mutual coldness, estrangement, and perhaps aversion, become its occupants; and the domestic hearth, which should be the centre of light, love and happiness, about which all should gather in cheerful and affectionate festivity, becomes an object of gloom and disaffection.

A young person never should indulge a passion or a feeling which would occasion or increase so deplorable an evil. If, unfortunately, he had not in childhood been trained to gentleness and piety, and finds his temper headstrong and violent, he should not, on that account, despair of its reformation. As there is no disposition naturally so good, as not to be susceptible of improvement, so there is *not one* so decidedly bad, as not to admit of being restrained and moderated. He who said to the waves, "Be still," and they instantly obeyed his voice, is ever ready to assist, with his grace, those who are desirous of quelling the tumult of passion. When evil propensities are judiciously governed and corrected, they usually become means of sanctification.

Persons of the most ardent and impetuous temperaments have, by the grace of God, and their own care and watchfulness, become models of meekness, moderation, and sanctity. Of the youthful duke of Burgundy, we are told by his biographer, that "he was born terrible, and, during his first years, continued an object of terror: that he was hard-hearted; irascible to the extreme of passion, even against inanimate objects; impetuous to a degree of fury; incapable of bearing the least opposition to his wishes, even from time or climate, without putting himself into paroxysms of rage that made others tremble for their existence; stubborn in the highest degree, and passionate in the pursuit of every kind of pleasure: that he considered other men as atoms, to whom he bore no resemblance.

and regarded even his brothers, although they were educated on an equality with himself, as intermediate beings between him and the rest of mankind." "But," adds the writer, "the prodigy was, that, in a short space of time, under the care of Fenelon, religion and the grace of God made him a new man, and changed those bad qualities into the opposite virtues. From the abyss which I have described, there arose an affable, gentle, moderate, patient, modest prince, austere only to himself, observant of his duties, and sensible of their great extent. His only object seemed to be, to perform all his duties as a son and a subject, and to qualify himself for the discharge of future obligations."

Madame de Maintenon speaks in a similar manner:—"We saw all those defects, which in the youth of the duke of Burgundy alarmed us so much, gradually disappear. His virtue kept pace with his years; and so much had his piety changed him, that, from being the most passionate of men, he became mild, gentle, and complying; one would have thought that mildness was his natural disposition, and that he was innately good."

St. Francis of Sales was of so ardent a temperament, that, to subdue it, he assures us, it cost him twelve years' struggle: and yet his meekness became such that it always appeared on his invariably serene countenance. His mien was so inexpressibly amiable and benign, that, as we are assured by his contemporary, St. Vincent of Paul, he might be regarded as the living image of our Blessed Redeemer.

The rudeness of others should not prevent us from exercising politeness towards them. To treat them politely is the best means of triumphing over ourselves, and very frequently, of reforming them; whilst it secures to us that interior peace which always flows from the consciousness of having performed an action, at once opposed to the false maxims of corrupt nature, and in accordance with the dictates of religion.

In a certain family there was one of a very disobliging disposition, who would not put himself to the slightest inconvenience or make the least sacrifice to oblige. He seemed so entirely engrossed with his own little gratifications as to be quite insensible to the feelings or convenience of others. Another member of the family, of a very religious and affectionate disposition, resolved to effect his reform. He availed himself of every opportunity to oblige him, anticipated his most trifling wants, and even sought occasions of contributing to his convenience. A great change was soon visible; acts of kindness began to be exercised; the dis-

position to do them was gradually acquired ; and this unaccommodating individual became afterwards remarkable in the family for his polite attentions. The person who had made the experiment, was amply compensated by the general good feeling which the change produced, and by the many kindnesses which he afterwards received from the individual whose disobliging manners he had thus been instrumental in correcting.

To acquire habits of politeness, then, a person must begin in youth—under the eyes of his mother. He must cultivate a deep reverence for parents ; a sincere affection for relatives and friends ; gentleness and courtesy to equals ; affability to inferiors ; cheerfulness of mind ; a desire to please and oblige ; a gentle, amiable, engaging manner of acquitting himself of every domestic duty. He must do all this, with a view of God, and an intention of pleasing Him. Such a person will not, when he enters society, disgust by rude or unbecoming manners ; but will, wherever he may be placed, find the exercise of politeness easy and agreeable ; will secure for himself the respect of all who witness his conduct ; and, what is infinitely better, will, by the exalted motive of his actions, obtain the blessing and approbation of Heaven.

This chapter cannot be more appropriately concluded than by the following extract from the description of our divine Redeemer, in his intercourse with his Apostles, by a Father of the Society of Jesus. “They were men, for the most part, without education, good-breeding, or politeness ; yet never did he separate himself from them, never did he appear pained or dejected by their ill manners. He instructed them with patience, reprehended them with meekness, and gave them nothing to suffer. He lived with them on a kind of equality, always ready to serve them, and to receive their least services with such sweetness and affability, that hardly could it be perceived that he was the master.”



PART FIRST

OF MODESTY IN THE EXTERIOR.

CHAPTER I.

ON DEPORTMENT.

Nothing contributes more to exterior dignity and propriety of manners, than exactness in preserving the natural positions and motions of each part of the body ; so true it is, as a late writer has very justly remarked, that " gracefulness is to the body what good sense is to the mind." Young persons, especially, are very subject to defects offensive, alike, to modesty and gracefulness. The first of these is a silly affectation, which puts the body, as it were, upon the rack, and governs all its motions as if it were a piece of machinery.

An artificially-measured step, accompanied with an air of affected gravity, is no less opposed to propriety than that carelessness of manner which is the effect of sloth, or of low and vulgar sentiments. Persons of a lively and impetuous temperament should watch over themselves with greater vigilance than others. Their posture in standing or sitting should be adjusted with thoughtfulness and decorum, and their gestures few but appropriate.

It is not, however, meant that a young person should assume that grave and thoughtful air which is the companion of maturer years ; no more is required than that his deportment be modest, graceful, and reserved, yet without stiffness or affectation.

There is a gravity of demeanor indicative of haughtiness, which, in any one, but particularly in a Christian, whose divine Model was " meek and humble of heart," is reprehensible. The exalted idea of his spiritual origin and destiny, that every Christian should have, would impart to his conduct that sweet and amiable gravity which inspires respect and confidence. An air of elevation and dignity, when regulated by modesty, humility, and a feeling sense

of what a Christian is, or, at least, ought to be, bears a relation to the dignity and majesty of God.

If circumstances require a person to remain standing, he should not stoop, keep his head on one side, or lean indolently against the wall or the furniture.

In sitting, he should, to preserve a graceful and agreeable position, select a high rather than a low chair. He should not throw his arm over the back of it, nor rest his elbow on the back of another chair to support his head, nor swing himself in his chair as in a balance. He should sit in rather an upright position, and not change his seat without necessity; neither should he draw his chair with noise along the floor, nor place it in a situation inconvenient to those who leave or enter the apartment.

It would be improper to select the handsomest chair in the room, or an armed chair, in preference to an ordinary one; but if invited to either, he should take it without hesitation. To take such a chair, in the first case, would betray rudeness or self-importance; to refuse it, in the second, would be questioning the judgment of the person who offered it.

On entering an apartment, if there be many present, one should glance around to pay his regards to all, and having bowed, retire to the place assigned him, or to that which is most convenient. If on terms of intimacy, and that he finds it necessary to shake hands, he should first advance to the mistress of the house, then to the others, in the order of their rank.

One should not stand while others are sitting, nor sit while they are standing. If the person who addresses another remains standing, the latter, if sitting, should rise, and not reply in a sitting posture, unless desired to do so.

In meeting acquaintances in the street, they should never be addressed in so loud a tone of voice, that either their names or the nature of the conversation could be known by persons passing by. The same should be observed in shops and places of public resort.

When a person, in company with another, meets a friend or an acquaintance, he should not introduce the parties to each other unless he has reason to believe that doing so would be mutually agreeable. The inferior in point of age or rank should be always introduced to the superior.

Modes of salutation should be particularly attended to. With equals and inferiors, the most ordinary is a slight inclination of the head; with equals on familiar terms, a gesture with the hand; and with those who by their sta-

tion or virtues are entitled to peculiar respect, a touching, or raising of the hat. This last mode is that which is usual when meeting a clergyman. The exalted dignity to which he has been raised, and the reverence and love which we feel for that almighty Being whose ambassador he is, should inspire us with veneration for his person ; and this interior feeling should, on every suitable occasion, be accompanied by its appropriate exterior expression.

Children should be instructed never to fail in this tribute of respect and reverence. So long as they respect religion, so long will they respect its minister. When they cease to respect him, they soon begin to disrespect religion also ; and as it is hardly possible to feel interior respect without manifesting it exteriorly, so these sentiments will soon be extinguished within us, if their exterior expression be habitually disregarded.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE HEAD.

The head should be kept erect ; it should not be turned giddily from side to side. When engaged in conversation, we should pay particular attention to the regulation of its motions.

In presenting or receiving anything, we should make a slight inclination with the head.

We should never answer by a nod of the head the questions that are put to us, nor testify indifference or contempt by a gesture of this description.

Putting the hand to the head, or touching the hair, particularly at table, should be avoided ; and children, when guilty of any rudeness in this respect, should be admonished not to repeat it.

The ears should be kept perfectly clean ; but they should never be cleaned in presence of others.

The hair should be combed and brushed every morning, both as a part of external cleanliness and as a means of its preservation ; but it should be remembered, that though a moderate and becoming attention to the hair is necessary, yet too much care of it, or excessive precision in its adjustment, is inconsistent with Christian or religious modesty.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE COUNTENANCE.

The wise man says, that a man of sense is known by the expression of his countenance. "It is," says an ancient writer, "the mirror of the soul, the attestation of modesty, or the witness of the corruption of the heart." When our conduct is actuated by amiable and benevolent sentiments, the countenance is an object of edification. To render it agreeable to others, it must have nothing in its expression either severe or repulsive; nothing wild or ferocious; nothing indicative either of levity or ostentation. It should exhibit an amiable gravity, a pure, disinterested benevolence, a calm and thoughtful serenity, free from gloom and despondency on the one hand, and from frivolity or dissipation on the other.

The expression of the countenance should, however, be varied according to the circumstances in which one may be placed, or the persons with whom one may converse. It would evidently be improper, nay, offensive, to jest and laugh whilst speaking to persons in affliction; to address them in a gay or joyous tone; or to converse with them on some sorrowful event with an air of indifference. It would be equally improper, when the conversation turns on amusing or agreeable subjects, to assume a thoughtful or melancholy air.

With regard to his personal affairs, the truly wise person preserves, as much as possible, a serene countenance. As he recognizes the will of the Almighty in all events, and humbly submits to his ever-wise and equitable decrees, so his countenance always bespeaks that calm and peaceful submission which reigns in his soul. The countenance must, and indeed will, give expression to different sensations of the soul; but the man of sense and virtue possesses sufficient self-command to observe due moderation in any manifestation of his sorrowful or joyous feelings.

Nothing is more painful, particularly to those who are obliged to live and converse with him, than a man whose countenance expresses gaiety at one moment and ill-humor at another. Such instability is a proof that he suffers himself to be easily borne away by the tumult of his passions, that he possesses little good sense or solid virtue, and has little regard for the feelings or happiness of those around him. Such persons make themselves the plague of their children and domestics, instead of being models

for their imitation, and guardians placed over them for their comfort and protection.

When in the presence of persons whose age, virtue, or station, merits particular veneration or respect, the countenance should express those feelings, without, however, any childish timidity, which is ordinarily the mark of a weak mind or of an ignorance of the qualities which Christian modesty should possess. With our friends we should always preserve a gay and cheerful countenance, in order to promote their happiness and render conversation more easy and agreeable. Persons with whom we are but slightly acquainted, who are placed above us in station, or whose character may not be sufficiently known to us, should be treated with a respectful, yet cheerful reserve, and care taken not to act towards them, with a familiarity which may not be agreeable to them, or becoming in us.

Whatever be a young man's station in life, he should endeavor, by the faithful discharge of its duties, to render himself worthy of esteem. He should exhibit a manly independence, by not forcing himself on the attention of those who may consider themselves his superiors in rank, or who do not desire his acquaintance.

Young persons have often been injured, and their prospects in life blighted, by mixing with those of more elevated station; the inevitable consequences of which are, neglect of business, lavish expenditure, and, ultimately, poverty and degradation. A young man who lives in the bosom of his family, whose circle of acquaintance is limited, and who attends industriously to the business of his calling, possesses more real happiness, and lays the foundation of a greater share of future comfort and prosperity, than association with those of a higher order of intellect or more exalted position in life, could possibly procure. Virtue and happiness are preserved and protected in the one case, in the other they are but too frequently shipwrecked.

Before concluding this chapter, it may not be unimportant to remind those children for whose use it is intended, that cleanliness, especially of the face, should be attended to. In speaking of the countenance, it may also be observed, that the habitual sense of the presence of God, besides the spiritual advantages which it produces, has a considerable influence in moulding its expression; for he who is duly sensible of that presence, must, according to the remark of one of the saints, feel that all the days of his life are festive days with him, because he considers himself as

living in God, "in whom we live, move and have our being." He blends seriousness with joy, by the consciousness of God's continual presence; and he blends joy with seriousness, by the firm and lively hope that he is every moment receiving new graces and blessings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNTENANCE (CONTINUED).

We should avoid wrinkling the forehead. A wrinkled forehead is often the mark of a melancholy temper, or of a haughty soul that despises those whom it considers its inferiors. Children should be admonished to repress every sentiment of pride, and never to suffer the least symptom of so dangerous a vice to appear. They should be occasionally reminded that the poorest of God's creatures have been created by the same almighty Being, and for the same high destiny as themselves; that they have been redeemed with the same precious blood of an Incarnate God, and that we should regard them as our brethren on earth, our future co-heirs in Heaven, and as the representatives of him who considers as done to himself, the good or evil done to them. If this just and salutary reflection were deeply impressed on the mind and heart of young people, the contempt and superciliousness with which they sometimes treat their poorer fellow-beings would never disgrace their conduct. How much would the sum of human happiness be increased, if such sentiments received the attention to which they are entitled!

The most beautiful ornament of the countenance is modesty. It is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a servant of God. "Let your modesty be known to all men," says the Apostle; "the Lord is nigh." This modesty in the truly virtuous Christian suffuses the face with a certain tinge, which an ancient writer terms the hue of virtue. When the heart is pure and upright, the least unseemly word or action causes a blush—a manifestation of that delicacy of feeling of which the impious and obdurate are not susceptible.

Although the Gospel counsels us to turn the right cheek to him who strikes the left, yet no one should be so infatuated as to strike his neighbor, under the pretext that he ought to suffer it with patience. A blow on the face is, of all affronts, one of the most insulting; it is the effect of

uncontrolled anger, of mean revenge. He who is struck, should not, however, avenge the wrong by a similar insolence, no matter what the world may think or say. He should remember that his divine Master was struck on the face, and was, during the whole course of his passion, the object of blasphemy, contumely, and unheard of outrages. He should remember that the noblest revenge of a Christian is to bear injuries with patience, and to pardon those who insult him ; thus imitating the adorable Model of the elect, who prayed for his enemies, and in death recommended them to the mercy of his Eternal Father. We cannot, indeed, always be master of the first impulses of passion, but we can, by habitual watchfulness and restraint, forbear any action inconsistent with the spirit and maxims of the Gospel.

Revenge was regarded even by the sages of antiquity as a violent and malignant passion ; and its indulgence, a proof of cowardice and imbecility, rather than as a mark of courage or magnanimity.

In pardoning an injury, we may convert an enemy into a friend ; but if we fail in this, we shall at least feel the happy consciousness of having sacrificed resentment to duty, and performed a deed worthy the applause of all good men, and deserving the approbation of God and his angels.

CHAPTER V.

THE COUNTENANCE (CONTINUED).

In Holy Writ, the eyes are called the *windows of the soul*, because its various feelings and emotions are easily discernible through them. Their movements should, therefore, be regulated with special care. The looks of the modest and humble are ever mild, peaceful, and reserved ; those of the proud and overbearing are insolent and haughty.

To turn the eyes lightly from side to side, without fixing them on anything, is a sign of a giddy and an unstable character. Good sense and politeness equally forbid this fault. Some look at an object with a kind of vacant gaze. This may happen when the mind is pre-occupied with some important affair ; but in most cases it is an indication of a mind habitually distracted, and, therefore, incapable of attending for any length of time to any specific object.

Some persons when in affliction look fixedly on the ground, and appear unconscious of what takes place around

them. How just soever the cause of their grief may be they should not indulge such an objectionable manifestation of it: to do so argues a state of excessive dejection and mental weakness, unbecoming in persons instructed in the truths and maxims of the Gospel. To look over the shoulder, to distort the eyes in order to excite laughter, to stare boldly at others, are all great improprieties; but to fix the eyes on any object calculated to sully that purity of mind and heart which forms the Christian's richest treasure, would be contrary not only to propriety, but also to the spirit of Christian and religious modesty.

He who is truly grateful for the gift of sight, who often reflects on its sublime destiny hereafter, namely, the vision of God "face to face, and as He is," will be far from making use of this precious gift to offend its bountiful Giver. He will, on the contrary, use it as a means of serving Him with the utmost fidelity, and of elevating his mind to the contemplation of that bright and everlasting vision of which He has promised it the enjoyment. The sight of the heavens, the earth, the sea, a flower, will remind him of his glorious Benefactor, and raise his soul to Him in transports of love, gratitude, and admiration. Happy is he, who, from an early period of life, has learned to make every object in creation a means of more closely uniting him with his Creator.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE COUNTENANCE.

Young persons should be provided with a pocket-handkerchief as soon as they are able to use one. This will prevent those improprieties, particularly snuffling, into which their age and thoughtlessness render them liable to fall.

In the use of their pocket-handkerchiefs, many persons offend against propriety. Some wave them about, others keep them constantly in their hands, and frequently let them fall on the ground; others lay them on chairs, tables, and other articles of furniture. All these faults should be avoided. The pocket-handkerchief should be seen as little as possible; it should be kept in the pocket, and taken out only when necessary. It should be used silently, without violent action of the hands, and returned immediately to its place.

Care should be taken not to handle the pocket-handkerchief of another. Should he let it fall, you may notify him, but you should not reach it to him. If the pocket-handkerchief be used immediately before entering an apartment it will frequently happen that there will be no need to use it during one's stay, unless it be of long continuance.

Every effort should be made to avoid yawning in company. Indeed it would be better to retire, than by yawning to give persons to understand that one is weary of their society.

When sneezing or coughing, one should take care, by the intervention of his hand or pocket-handkerchief, to prevent his saliva from falling on any person or on any article of furniture. It is rude to spit on the floor, or into the fire, or even on the footways in the streets. To spit on the floor in church is irreverent as well as rude. These faults have been committed by persons who, from their age and station, should have known better; but being faults, they should, notwithstanding, be avoided.

Young persons should be admonished against the practice of smoking, which is but too common with young men when they begin to associate with one another. Neither, as a general rule, should they take snuff. Habits of this kind are seldom overcome, and are sometimes, particularly smoking, productive of much inconvenience to the individual himself, and to those who, from a sense of duty, cannot withdraw from his company.

The mouth should be kept in its natural position, and should be rinsed with clean water every morning. Nothing should be taken which would render the breath disagreeable to others. The lips are frequently disfigured by biting, distorting, or compressing them; by raising them too much, or pulling them with the fingers. The teeth are frequently injured, either by neglecting to clean them, or by cleansing them with what is unfit for that purpose. They should be washed every day with water and a soft brush, and not picked with a pin or pen-knife. The end of a quill pointed bluntly may be used with safety; but it should be remembered that the teeth should never be picked at table. Children should avoid biting their nails; also cutting things with their teeth, and making trial of their power by bending or lifting things with them.

It would not be proper to close this chapter without allusion to a fault very prevalent among children, and which often accompanies them into advanced life, namely, filling

the mouth greedily with large portions of food, so as, in some instances, to be unable to breathe without difficulty. This practice is at once contrary to politeness and injurious to health.

Another fault of a similar character, is that of making an unnecessary, disagreeable noise with the lips in drinking tea, coffee, or other liquids. This rudeness is a certain mark of a neglected domestic education.

CHAPTER VII.

OF ARTICULATION.

It is difficult to understand those whose utterance is indistinct, or who speak in too low a tone of voice, or too rapidly. In speaking on any subject, we should remember that our object is to be heard and understood. A person should, therefore, assume a tone and manner of speaking suited to the place and audience. Too high a tone is indicative of arrogance; and too low a tone betrays childishness and timidity. Avoid both extremes.

Whilst excessive loudness of voice is generally regarded as characteristic of an overbearing disposition, politeness equally condemns that effeminacy of tone which is so common with the youth of our days. It is inconsistent alike with true dignity and elegance, and is an evident sign of the most pitiful foppery, or of great intellectual weakness.

Those whose utterance is defective, should endeavor to remedy it in early life. A little care at that period will enable them to overcome every defect which does not proceed from organic weakness or derangement; but, if suffered to become a habit, it will be almost impossible to correct it. One general rule for improvement is, to select the words and syllables most difficult of pronunciation, and continue to repeat them frequently. The power over them will increase almost insensibly, and the defect will soon be eradicated.

Reading aloud for a short time each day to some one capable of correcting you, or, not having such a person, reading aloud alone, and watching carefully the words and syllables which you are apt to pronounce incorrectly or indistinctly, is an excellent means of remedying defective articulation.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE BODY IN REFERENCE TO ITS ATTITUDES, &c.

Many young persons when walking stoop so much, that they resemble the aged or the feeble. The posture of the body should be erect, the shoulders square, and the chest expanded. In walking the arms should not be swung too much; nor should they hang stiffly by the sides. Their motion should be moderate, and the whole carriage easy, natural and unconstrained. To lean on the elbow when speaking or listening, to push any one with it, or to turn away, with a shrug of the shoulders, from one who comes to address you, are all contrary to good manners. There are many ways of ridding yourself of troublesome or importunate persons without having recourse to rudeness. Politeness and urbanity should at all times be observed; and while you discreetly avoid the company of those with whom you do not wish to associate, and rid yourself of it when they would force it upon you, yet you should do so without, if possible, wounding their feelings. This is in accordance with the spirit of religion, and also with that principle of self-respect by which the Christian should, on all occasions, be actuated.

The hands should be washed every morning; also before meals, and whenever anything has soiled them. A child should not, after having washed them, wipe them with his dress, or with anything not destined for that purpose.

A person should never reach his hand to be shaken by a superior in rank, unless they be on terms of intimacy; otherwise he might seem to transgress the bounds of due reserve. If the superior reach his hand, it should, of course, be respectfully and cordially received. Some reach their hands coldly; others offer but two or three fingers; this savors of haughtiness. In giving the hand, as in everything else, cordiality should be apparent. You will spare the feelings more by not offering it, than by doing so with coldness and reserve; but roughness is to be avoided. The shaking of hands is an outward expression of affection and good will; and, hence, it should ever be the exponent of those feelings, not the dictate of policy or dissimulation.

It is impolite to point at the person you speak of, whether he is near or distant; to pull the fingers one after another; and to move them continually, or to make a crackling noise with them.

The nails should be kept clean, but they must never be cleaned in company. They should not be cut down below the finger-ends, nor should the flesh at their roots be allowed to cover the white semicircle at the bottom of them.

When sitting, a person should assume an easy, graceful posture, without formality or affectation. He should sit steadily on his chair, with the knees not too close nor too far asunder, and the feet modestly disposed of, without being stretched out, or drawn in so close under his chair as to cause the knees to project; neither should he rest them on the rungs of the chairs, nor make a noise with them on the floor.

When standing, the feet should be turned out a little, the heels separated somewhat from each other. They should not be often moved from one position to another; but the position may, for the sake of greater ease, be occasionally changed.

Many, in walking, drag their feet after them in a slovenly manner; others walk on their toes, whilst others twirl on their heels in a rather ludicrous manner. Although it would be hard to prescribe methods of walking suited to all, one general rule for young persons might be, to raise the instep a little, which has the effect of stiffening the knee, and placing the shoulders in a graceful position. The step should not be too long, nor yet affectedly short. The pace should be moderate, without any notable haste, unless the nature of a person's occupation, or the business he has to transact, requires it. Dignity of carriage and manners should, at all times, be preserved.

In conclusion, it may be well to inculcate upon all, but especially upon the young, the necessity of washing their feet at stated times, and of changing their stockings when soiled, as there is nothing more disagreeable than the consequence of neglect in one or other of these particulars. Attention to them, on the other hand, is productive of the most salutary effects.



PART SECOND.

OF DECORUM IN ORDINARY ACTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

RISING AND GOING TO REST.

Children should be deeply impressed with the many advantages attending early rising. It is one of the best economists of time; it promotes the health of both body and mind, and greatly assists in the formation of moral and industrious habits. Sleep, when indulged to excess, impairs both physical and mental energy, interferes with the regular and efficient discharge of duty, and destroys all relish for enjoyments, except those of a coarse and, often, dangerous character. Hence, a fixed hour for rising, and also for retiring to rest, should be appointed, from which there should be no deviation, unless health or some other necessity require it.*

The sluggard seldom, if ever, prospers in business or attains any degree of eminence in his profession; while those who have been remarkable for a healthy old age, or for great intellectual acquirements, have generally acknowledged, that they have been in a great measure indebted for these advantages to their regularity in the distribution of time and to their early rising. Seven or eight hours' rest is as much as nature usually requires: and it should be remembered, that a difference of two hours each day in the time of rising, would in the ordinary average of human life, be equivalent to nearly ten years; and would, as has been well observed, "add ten years to a man's really useful existence."

Man, whatever may be his station, is born to labor. The dawning of day should remind him of this appendage of mortality. How often is the order of nature subverted! A large portion of the day is given to sleep, whilst almost

* An aged gentleman who had never known a day's illness, having been asked his secret, replied: "Dry feet and *early rising*; these are my only two precautions."

the entire night is spent in foolish and often criminal amusements, to the manifest injury of health, and, what is infinitely worse, the neglect of every religious duty.

The first thing that should be done by a Christian on awaking, is to make an offering of his thoughts, words, actions, and entire being, to the great Author of his existence by a fervent act of oblation, and with faith and humility to beg his blessing and protection during the day. He should then rise modestly, and never at this time converse with others, or occupy his mind with distracting concerns. To give the first moments of the day to dissipation of mind, would be unworthy a child of God, whose first thoughts should be consecrated to recollection and piety.

When clothed, he should place himself on his knees, and having recalled the presence of God, say devoutly his morning prayers; nor should he ever permit either business or amusement to interfere with so holy and essential a duty. A Christian should never satisfy himself with a few prayers said hurriedly while dressing. God deserves and demands the homages of all our powers and affections. Whoever entertains an exalted idea of the majesty of God, renders Him this tribute with corresponding exterior and interior reverence.

On retiring to rest, children should respectfully salute their parents and the elder members of the family. This act of politeness, besides being a duty, is an excellent means of preserving that good feeling which should subsist in the bosom of every family, and on which its happiness so much depends.

A Christian should never retire to rest without having adored God by humble prayer; thanked Him for his benefits; and implored his protection. He should examine his conscience; beg pardon for the sins into which he has fallen during the day; and firmly resolve with God's grace, to spend the day following in a manner more worthy his dignity of child of God and heir of his heavenly kingdom. "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day."

CHAPTER II.

OF DRESSING AND UNDRRESSING

One sensible effect of the sin of Adam, was the shame of being naked; and it was only after his sin that he felt, for the first time, the necessity of clothing. God provided

him with the skins of beasts as a garment, which served to remind him of the lappy state of peace and innocence from which he had fallen. Inheritors of his crime, we are sharers in his punishment. We, too, must be provided with raiment—a necessity which never would have existed, had not man contracted the stain of original guilt; for, he would have known no cause of shame, had he preserved the spotless purity with which he had been invested at his creation. Our dress, then, instead of being, as it often is, an incitement to vanity, should, by reminding us of our frailty, become the best safeguard of modesty and humility.

No person should employ another to dress him, unless in case of sickness, or want of sufficient strength; even children, when old enough to dress themselves, should not be permitted the assistance of others.

When a person has not to leave home or receive visits, he may, in the house, use any convenient dress. How excessive soever the heat of summer, it is an impropriety to appear before any one with the breast uncovered.

Rules as to the manner of dressing and undressing, would be quite unnecessary, if persons were only attentive to the dictates of propriety. Every liberty, it would sometimes seem, is permitted in this matter, and yet reason and religion plainly tell us that all should be done orderly, and with the strictest decorum. It is easy to perceive how contrary it is to Christian modesty to dress or undress, without necessity, in the presence of others.

CHAPTER III.

DRESS.

Clothing, in regard to its quality, form, and general appearance, should be consistent with the age and rank of the wearer. It should at all times be strictly modest, or never slovenly or untidy. The coat, and so forth, should be well brushed, the shirt-collar closed and always clean, the shoes or boots well polished; in fine, the whole exterior should exhibit great cleanliness, neatness, and unaffected grace.

Parents should be careful that the dress of their children be suitable to their condition, and that every extravagance therein be studiously avoided. A fondness for fine clothing often leads to ruinous expense; for, when vanity in dress has been habitually indulged, it is very difficult to limit its excesses.

Singularity in dress, and in the manner of wearing it, should be carefully guarded against. The usage of the country in which you live, and of the order of society in which you move, should guide you in the choice and form of your clothing. You must be careful, however, not to conform in all things to the customs which, at the moment, may prevail. Fashion is often whimsical and capricious, and should never be permitted to draw you into its follies and extravagances.

“ Be not the first on whom the new is tried.
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.”

Your dress should never exhibit either vanity or ostentation. The man who places his delight or his ambition in sumptuous apparel, degrades, whilst he seeks to exalt himself. That merit must be questionable indeed, which requires to be set off by trinkets and finery. Negligence, on the other hand, should equally be avoided. It is usually the effect of sloth, and is but too often accompanied with inattention to personal cleanliness.

The children of the poor should frequently be reminded how necessary it is to pay due attention to cleanliness, as a means both of preserving health, and of rendering themselves agreeable to those with whom they have intercourse. The privations which they so frequently endure, and the wretched clothes with which they are covered, together with the miserable and inconvenient habitations in which they dwell, render them so spiritless, that it becomes doubly incumbent on their instructors, while they console them under their trials, to make them sensible of the advantages resulting from personal cleanliness. How poorly soever a child may be dressed, provided his person and clothing are kept clean and in repair, and his demeanor is modest and unassuming, he will not fail to prepossess in his favor every one whose good opinion is really valuable.

The hat should be in keeping with the other parts of the dress. It should not be worn on the top of the head, nor on the side, nor so low as to cover the eyes, but straight on the head, with the front of the leaf facing the forehead. It should be taken off with the right hand, and, if necessary for the individual to remain uncovered, it may be held by the side, if standing; gracefully on the knees, if sitting; or disposed of in the nearest convenient place. In short morning visits it is generally taken into the apartment; but, if it is intended that the visit be of long continuance,

it is left in the hall or a place assigned for it. In visiting persons of distinction, the hat is not, by persons of inferior station, generally taken into the visiting apartment.

In concluding this chapter, it may be remarked, that an unassuming simplicity in dress is that most befitting a Christian. It will serve to remind him of the modesty by which his whole conduct should be distinguished, and will tend to the benefit of others, by inciting them to follow so praiseworthy an example. "Let your modesty be known to all men;" says the Apostle, "the Lord is nigh."

CHAPTER IV.

THE TABLE

God does not forbid the relish which nature takes in what is eaten; but reason and religion interdict either sensuality or gluttony. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God," is the admonition of St. Paul. Necessity, then, should be the motive of an action, which is in itself a subjection, rather than a perfection of our nature.

Conversations, the only subject of which is eating or drinking, are unworthy a rational being, much less a Christian. When such topics are introduced, you should be careful not to speak of the good dinners of which you may have partaken, and, still less, of the tables or good cheer to which you may have been invited.

Food is destined for the preservation of health and strength, but every kind of excess in its use should be avoided. He who would preserve temperance in its use, should confine himself, as much as possible, to the ordinary hour of meals. Food is given to children out of meals, but not to adults of maturer years, whose constitution or state of health does not stand in need of such indulgence. To eat several times in the day, and whenever an inclination for food is felt, besides being detrimental to health, may be regarded as a species of gluttony; and to drink, without necessity, out of the time of meals, will soon lead to habits very dangerous to sobriety. If the habit of drinking, even water, be indulged in youth, drink of a more pernicious character will be freely taken at a more advanced age.

The reproach of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees, of making perfection consist in external observances, in which rank

they placed the washing of hands before meals, does not dispense us from the duty of washing them before we sit down to table. It is not an ordinance of religion, but an observance prescribed by cleanliness and propriety. In ancient times it was usual to have a little fountain for this ablution, which was used both before and after dinner.

Politeness should be adhered to, even when a person dines alone. On such occasions he should not seek to free him-self from those observances which intercourse with civilized society requires. To do so would expose him to censure, insensibly rude or unbecoming manners.

When the time arrives for sitting down to table,* a young person should not seek a conspicuous place, nor that which is most convenient, but should wait until the first seats are taken by those whom age or station entitles to presidency. If a place be assigned him by the host, he should modestly accept it, satisfied that he is the best judge of the seats which his guests should occupy. If not invited to

* The following is from two little works on *Etiquette*, lately published:—

In giving a person an invitation to dinner, it would be impolite to say that he would be treated without ceremony. Such an invitation would be ungrateful, unless it be the only way of inducing the individual to accept it; because, from the moment a person gives an invitation, he should endeavor to entertain his guest well.

Having accepted an invitation, a person should take care to arrive punctually, not too late, nor yet too soon; both would be inconvenient. The acceptance of an invitation is to be addressed to the lady of the house.

Should your host offer you the place of honor at table, it is wrong to refuse it. To do so keeps the company standing, and is considered very impolite.

If the places at table are marked out by cards, it is polite to assist others of the company in finding their places. When not marked, the host or the hostess ought to call successively to each company to their places according to their dignity or age.—gentlemen and ladies in turn. The principal places at table are those to the right and left of the mistress of the house, who occupies the centre of the table; then those on each side of the master of the house—*vis-a-vis*.

As soon as you are seated at table, place your table napkin across your knees, and remove the roll which you may probably find within it to the left side of your plate.

The soup should be placed on the table first. Some old-fashioned persons still place soup and fish together; but "it is a custom more honored in the breach than the observance." Still more old-fashioned, and a still worse taste is it to ask your guests if they will take "soup or fish." They always mean separate courses, as the fish and the meat; and all experienced diners take both. In any case, it is inhospitable to appear to force a choice upon a visitor when that visitor, in all probability, will prefer to take his soup first and his fish afterwards. All well-ordered dinners begin with soup, whether in summer or winter. The lady of the house should help it and serve it round, without asking each individual in turn. It is as much an understood thing as the bread

any particular place, he should unaffectedly and silently take one of the last.

Much praise is due to those families who have preserved the laudable custom of grace before and after meals. What can be more unbecoming a Christian than not to invoke the blessing of God on the food of which he is about to partake, or not to return Him thanks for the benefits received ! How can we forget that God is the Author of every good ; and that to his providence we are every moment of our existence indebted for his preservation and care of us ? By a strange abuse, which cannot be too much nor too frequently censured, we, in the very moment of making use of the means of preserving existence, seem to forget the beneficent hand that confers them. On no account and on no occasion should a Christian be guilty of such ingratitude. Even in companies where grace is not formally said, he may, by placing his hand on his breast, or by making the sign of the cross upon it, accompanied by a secret

beside each plate, and those who do not choose it, are always at liberty to leave it untasted.

In eating soup, remember always to take it from the side of the spoon, and to make no sound in doing so.

You should never ask for a second supply of either soup or fish ; it delays the next course, and keeps the table waiting.

The host should never recommend or eulogize any particular dish : the guest will take it for granted that everything at the table is excellent.

When anything is handed round the table, each should, after handing the salver to those near him, help himself promptly and without choosing.

The master of the house should see that the dinner service proceeds with order, and that each one is attended to. He ought not during this time reprehend the servants for any mistake ; it would be much better to call the mover and speak in a low tone if necessary. He should never relinquish his knife and fork until his guests have finished.

Never offer to "assist" your neighbors to this or that dish. The word is inexpressibly vulgar—all the more vulgar for its affectation of elegance. "Shall I send you some mutton?" or "May I help you to grouse?" is better chosen and better bred.

As a general rule, it is better not to ask your guests if they will partake of the dishes, but to send the plates round, and let them accept or decline as they please.

As soon as you are helped, begin to eat, or, if the viands are too hot for your palate, take up your knife and fork and appear to begin. To wait for others is now not only an old-fashioned, but ill-bred.

Never offer to pass on the plate to which you have been helped. This is a still more vulgar piece of politeness, and belongs to the manners of a hundred years ago. The lady of the house who sends your plate to you is the best judge of precedence at her own table.

In helping soup, fish, or any other dish, remember that to overfill a plate is as bad as to supply it too scantily.

Silver fish-knives are generally to be met with at the best tables ; but where there are none, a piece of crust should be taken in the left

elevation of the heart, comply with a duty which the first dictates of gratitude and religion demand.

In sitting at table, a person should be neither too near nor too far from it. He should not stretch back on his chair, nor yet keep himself bent forwards; still less, lean his elbows on the table: he may, however, lean his wrists upon it gently.

The napkin, usually laid at each person's place, is intended to preserve one's clothes from being soiled, and to wipe the fingers and mouth when necessary. A young person should not be in a hurry to unfold it, but rather wait till others at table set the example.

In taking soup, which is the first served, the spoon should be held in the right hand, and not filled to the brim. When supping it, place the side of the spoon next your mouth. Take it near the plate, and avoid speaking at the time. If it is too hot, do not blow upon it, but let it cool.

Do not cause yourself to be served first, nor by any sign or gesture betray the least impatience for food. Everything at table should be done with calmness and moderation.

hand, and the fork in the right. There is no exception to this rule in eating fish.

We presume it is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that he is never, under any circumstance, to convey his knife to his mouth. Peas are eaten with the fork; tarts, curry, and puddings of all kinds with the spoon.

Always help fish with a fish-slice, and tart and puddings with a spoon, or, if necessary, a spoon and fork.

Asparagus must be helped with the asparagus-tongs.

In eating asparagus, it is well to observe what others do, and act accordingly. Some very well-bred people eat it with the fingers; others cut off the heads, and convey them to the mouth upon the fork. It would be difficult to say which is the more correct.

In eating stone fruit, such as cherries, damsons, and so forth, the same rule had better be observed. Some put the stones out from the mouth into a spoon, and so convey them to the plate. Others cover the lips with the hand, drop them unseen into the palm, and so deposit them on the side of the plate. In our own opinion, the last is by far the better way, as it effectually conceals the return of the stones, which is certainly the point of the highest importance. One thing certain, they must never be dropped from the mouth to the plate.

In helping sauce, always pour it on the side of the plate.

A silver knife and fork should be placed to each guest at dessert.

If you are asked to prepare fruit for a lady, be careful to do so by means of the silver knife and fork only, and never to touch it with your fingers.

It is wise never to partake of any dish without knowing of what ingredients it is composed. You can always ask the servant who hands it to you, and you thereby avoid all danger of having to commit the impoliteness of leaving it, and showing that you do not approve of it.

Never speak while you have anything in your mouth.

Be careful never to taste soups or puddings, till you are sure they are sufficiently cool; as, by disregarding this caution, you may be com-

When served, it is quite unnecessary to wait until others are served also ; but you should eat slowly enough that others may have sufficient time to finish their dish at or about the same time as yourself. As to the time of ceasing to eat, the best rule is, to aim at being neither the first nor the last.

When your spoon, knife, or fork wants cleaning, it should be changed, and should, on no account, be wiped in the napkin or table-cloth. The knife should be held in the right hand, the fork in the left. They should be held by the handle only. The knife should not be used for eating with : use the fork or the spoon for that purpose. In eating fish, the fork should be held in the right hand, and a piece of bread in the left.

Salt should be taken only with the salt-spoon. The tumbler or drinking-glass is not to be filled to the brim.

Fragments of meat, bones, or crumbs, should never be allowed to fall on the floor or about the table. They should be put on the small plate usually laid for that purpose. In removing anything from the mouth which a person does not wish to swallow, as a fish-bone or the like, the fingers

should be used to swallow what is dangerously hot, or be driven to the unpardonable alternative of returning it to your plate.

When eating or drinking, avoid every kind of audible testimony to the facts.

If you should unfortunately overturn or break anything, do not apologize for it. You can show your regret in your face, but it is no well-bred to put it into words.

Should you injure a lady's dress, apologize amply, and assist her, if possible, to remove all traces of the damage.

To abstain from taking the last piece on the dish, or the last glass of wine in the decanter, only because it is the last, is highly ill-bred. It implies a fear that the vacancy cannot be supplied, and almost conveys an affront to your host.

In withdrawing from table, the napkin should be laid either on the table or on the back of the chair. If a person wishes to depart before the company separates, he should do so at once without the ceremony of leave-taking, which causes, on such occasions, an unpleasant hiatus in the party.

In summing up the little duties and laws of the table, a popular author has said that—"The chief matter of consideration at the dinner-table, as, indeed, everywhere else in the life of a gentleman - is to be perfectly composed and at his ease. He speaks deliberately ; he performs the most important act of the day as if he were performing the most ordinary. Yet there is no appearance of trifling or want of gravity in his manner ; he maintains the dignity which is so becoming on so vital an occasion. He performs all the ceremonies, yet in the style of one who performs no ceremonies at all. He goes through all the complicated duties of the scene as if he were to the manner born."

"To invite a friend to dinner," says Brillat-Savarin, "is to become responsible for his happiness so long as he is under your roof." Again.—"he who receives friends at his table, without having bestowed his personal supervision upon the repast placed before them, is unworthy to have friends."

only should be used. It would be considered rude to cast it from the mouth on the plate or the table.

Sauce should not be poured over fish or vegetables, but alongside of them.

At table the following faults should be avoided: handling fruit or other viands; sinking the finger-nails in the rind of fruit; wiping the plate, fork, spoon or knife with the napkin; smelling any of the food; looking curiously, at the plates of others; holding the knife or fork in an upright position, or making gestures with them.*

If a person should ever find anything disagreeable on

* 'Tis an old saying that

“Man should be taught as tho' you taught him not,
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.”

Still it will not be wholly out of place here to insert the following piquant remarks which may, but more probably may not, have been made by a host to his guest:—

“Now, my friend, let us go to dinner, and I will soon tell you whether you are a well-bred man or not; and here let me promise that what may be styled good manners for a small dinner may be styled good manners for a large one, and *vice versa*. Now, the first thing you do is to sit down. Stop, sir! pray do not cram yourself into the table in that way; no, nor sit a yard from it, like that. How graceless, inconvenient, and in the way of conversation! Why, dear me, you are positively putting your elbows on the table, and now you have got your hands fumbling about with the spoons and forks, and now you are nearly knocking my new hock glasses over. Can't you take your hands down, sir? Didn't you learn that in the nursery? Didn't your mamma say to you, “Never put your hands above the table except to carve or eat!” Oh! but come, no nonsense sit up if you please. I can't have your fine head of hair forming a side dish on my table you must not bury your face in the plate, you came to show it, and it ought to be alive. Well, but there is no occasion to throw your head back like that, you look like an alderman, sir, *after* dinner. Pray, don't lounge in that sleepy way. You are here to eat, drink, and be merry. You can sleep when you get home.

“Well, then, I suppose you can see your napkin. Got none, indeed! Very likely, in *my* house. You may be sure that I never sit down to a meal without napkins. I don't want to make my tablecloths unfit for use, and I don't want to make my trousers unwearable. Well now we are all seated, you can unfold it on your knees: no, no; don't tuck it into your waistcoat like an alderman; and what! what on earth do you mean by wiping your forehead with it? Do you take it for a towel? Well, never mind. I am consoled that you did not go farther, and use it as a pocket-handkerchief. So talk away to the lady on your right, and wait till soup is handed to you. By the way, that waiting is a most important part of table manners, and as much as possible you should avoid asking for any thing or helping yourself from the table. Your soup you eat with a spoon—I don't know what else you *could* eat it

his plate, he should remove it quietly, without speaking of it to any of the company.

When affairs oblige one to leave immediately after dinner, he ought not disturb his host by ill-timed farewells, or even by expressions of thankfulness, especially if he cannot do so without interrupting the attentions which the host is occupied in paying to his other guests.

The duties of a young person at table may be summed up as follows: Select, if left to your choice, the lowest place: sit in a becoming posture at the table; say, recollectedly, the grace before and after meals; be moderate in

with—but then it must be one of good size. Yes, that will do, but I beg you will not make that odious noise in taking your soup. It is louder than a dog lapping water, and a cat would be quite genteel to it. Then you need not scrape up the plate in that way, nor even tilt it to get the last drop. I shall be happy to send you some more; but I must just remark, that it is not the custom to take two helpings of soup, and it is liable to keep other people waiting, which, once for all, is a selfish and intolerable habit. You are keeping my servant, sir. Will you, or will you not, take turbot? Don't examine it in that way; it is quite fresh, I assure you, take or decline it. Ah! you take it, but that is no reason why you should take up a knife too. Fish, I repeat, must never be touched with a knife. Take a fork in the right, and a small piece of bread in the left hand. Good, but—? Oh! that is atrocious; of course you must not swallow the bones, but you should rather do so than spit them out in that way. Put up your napkin like this, and land the said bone on the side of your plate. Don't rub your bread in the sauce, my good man, nor go propping about after the shrimps or oysters therein. Oh! how horrid: I declare your mouth was wide open and full of fish. Small pieces, I beseech you; and once for all, whatever you eat, keep your mouth shut, and never attempt to talk with it full.

“ So now you have got a pâté. Surely you are not taking two on your plate. There is plenty of dinner to come, and one is quite enough. Oh! dear me, you are incorrigible. What! a knife to cut that light, brittle pastry? No, nor fingers—never. Nor a spoon—almost as bad. Take your fork, sir, your fork; and now you have eaten, oblige me by wiping your mouth and moustache with your napkin, for there is a piece of the pastry hanging to the latter, and looking very disagreeable. Well, you can refuse a dish if you like. There is no positive necessity for you to take venison if you don't want it. But, at any rate, do not be in that terrific hurry. You are not going off by the next train. Wait for the sauce and wait for vegetables; but whether you eat them or not, do not begin before every body else. Surely you must take my table for that of a railway refreshment-room, for you have finished before the person I helped first. Fast eating is bad for the digestion, my good sir, and not very good manners either. What! are you trying to eat meat with a fork alone? Oh! it is sweetbread, I beg your pardon, you are quite right. Let me give you a rule.—Everything that can be cut without a

the quantity of food, and avoid all avidity in the manner of taking it; let there be nothing rude or affectedly polite in your demeanor; be attentive to the comfort and convenience of others; let your whole conduct be amiable and obliging; and do all quietly, silently, and without ostentation. In fine, treat those with whom you associate as the representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will not be likely to fail in the kindness, courtesy, and respect to which they are entitled.

All kinds of violent exercise immediately after dinner are prejudicial to health, and should, therefore, be avoided.

knife, should be cut with a fork alone. Eat your vegetables therefore with a fork. No, there is no necessity to take a spoon for peas; a fork in the right hand will do. What I did I really see you put your knife into your mouth? Then I must give you up. Once for all, and ever, the knife is to cut, not to help with. Pray, do not munch in that noisy manner; chew your food well, but softly. *Eat slowly.* Have you not heard that Napoleon lost the battle of Leipsic by eating too fast? It is a fact though. His haste caused indigestion, which made him incapable of attending to the details of the battle. You see you are the last person eating at table. Sir, I will not allow you to speak to my servant in that way. If they are so remiss as to oblige you to ask for anything, do it gently, and in a low tone, and thank a servant just as much as you would his master. Ten to one he is as good a man; and because he is your inferior in position, is the very reason you should treat him courteously. Oh! it is of no use to ask me to take wine; far from pacifying me, it will only make me more angry, for I tell you the custom is quite gone out, except in a few country villages, and at a mess-table. However, there is this consolation, if you should ask any one to take wine with you, he or she *cannot* refuse, so you have your own way. Make yourself more agreeable; you did not come merely to eat. Don't sit as glum as the Memnon at Thebes; talk and be pleasant. Now, you have some pudding. No knife—no! no! A spoon if you like, but better still, a fork. Yes, ice requires a spoon; there is a small one handed you, take that.

“Say no.” That is the fourth time wine has been handed to you, and I am sure you have had enough. Decline this time if you please. Decline that dish too. Are you going to eat of everything that is handed? I pity you if you do. No, you must not ask for more cheese, and you must eat it with your fork. Break the rusk with your fingers. Good. You are drinking a glass of old port. Do not quaff it down at a gulp in that way. **Never** drink a whole glassful of anything at once.

Well, here is the wine and dessert. Take whichever wine you like, but remember you must keep to that, and not change about. Well, the dinner has done you good, and me too. You will come out admirably at your next dinner with all my teaching.

CHAPTER V.

VISITS.

Justice, as well as charity, requires that we visit our relations and friends, when they are sick, afflicted or placed in embarrassing circumstances. We should also visit in their trials, those with whom we may have had any misunderstanding, if we reasonably believe that our visit will be acceptable. The Gospel makes it an imperative duty to love our enemies; and at what time can we so meritoriously comply with this duty, as when they are laboring under afflictions? Even pagans regarded it as a virtue becoming the exalted dignity of man, to do good to those who injured them.

Justice requires that we visit our superiors also at suitable times, in order to testify the respect and confidence which they have a right to expect from us. Charity demands that we visit our inferiors, to edify or instruct them; or to console and render them such assistance as their wants may require,

In all our visits we should imitate the example of Jesus Christ, our divine Master and our Model. If he entered the house of Zaccheus, it was to bring salvation to that house; if he visited Martha and Mary, it was to snatch from the arms of death the brother whom they loved; if he offered to go to the house of the centurion, it was to effect a miraculous cure. Thus, all the visits of our divine Savior were accompanied with deeds of beneficence.

He is our model; hence, our visits should neither be idle nor useless. If no other evil attended them, save waste of that inestimable treasure, time; this alone should be a sufficient inducement to all who value it, prudently to abstain from them.

Visits which are made through ceremony, or for the purpose of amusement, should be short and not consume the time destined for business. Nor should visits be made at the hour of meals, or at inconvenient hours, as such may derange more or less the previous arrangements of the parties visited. People who have little to occupy their own time, very frequently and very unreasonably trespass on the time of others, and thus render themselves troublesome by their long and unseasonable visits. Congratulatory visits should be made shortly after the event.

On arriving at a house, a person should not announce himself with a loud knocking at the door, nor by speaking

in a loud tone of voice. Rapping at the door should be done gently, yet so as to be distinctly heard. A bell should not be rung with violence; and there should be left, between the first and second time a person raps or rings, a sufficient interval for the opening of the door.

A person should not enter an apartment without giving notice in some way or other, even though the door be open. A slight knock will, generally, suffice.

While standing in a hall, it is exceedingly improper to sing, whistle, speak loud, touch the furniture, or gaze through the windows.

If, on entering an apartment, you find the person you visit engaged with others, you should not interrupt him, but remain at a distance until he is disengaged. If invited to any particular seat, it should be thankfully accepted.

The tone, language, and manners of a young person, during his visit, should be modest, respectful, and engaging. With superiors, he should be careful to avoid familiarity on the one hand, and too much ceremoniousness on the other; the one might be considered obtrusive, the other might embarrass.

Care should be taken not to prolong a visit beyond the time which politeness, or the business we have to transact, necessarily requires. You should sit while the person visited sits, and rise when he rises. His rising from his chair should be regarded as a signal for your departure, and you should never remain one moment longer than he seems to desire. It is no small mark of politeness, and indeed of prudence, to know the exact time at which your company ceases to be agreeable.

It is a great incivility to give unnecessary delay to your visitors. If occupied, you should send some person to receive them, and pay them the necessary attentions, until such time as you may be disengaged.

When a person cannot remain with his visitors as long as civility would dictate, he might, after a short conversation, beg leave to retire, without even concealing that he was at that moment seriously engaged with business, which would not admit of postponement.

You should receive your visitors with frankness and cordiality, during their stay manifest an interest in their conversation, and, at their departure, accompany them to the door. Dignitaries and public functionaries are dispensed from this last ceremony, the nature of their respective duties requiring so much of their attention.

CHAPTER VI.

RECREATION.

Recreation should occupy some portion of each day, in order to unbend the mind after serious application, or to relieve the body after fatiguing employment. God, sensible of the weakness of man's nature, authorizes the relaxation necessary for the reparation and maintenance of that strength, which occupations of long continuance always tend to weaken.

The consecration of the seventh day after the creation, is a figure of the repose after labor, which man is privileged to enjoy. Our blessed Lord himself interrupted his laborious mission to procure his Apostles a short but necessary respite; and the faithful, while they were yet animated by the holy fervor which the visible presence of our Lord had excited, devoted certain times to joy and relaxation; but their joy was pure without alloy; their repose partook in nothing of that effeminacy, slothfulness, and delicacy, by which latter ages have been so discreditably distinguished.

The amusements of a Christian should be regulated by necessity, and should never transgress the bounds of moderation.

Conversation forms the most ordinary recreation after meals. It should be cheerful, without levity, and useful, without either seriousness or ostentation. You may laugh, indeed, for there is a time for laughter, but that laughter should be moderate and discreet. To laugh loudly is rude; to laugh without reason is folly; and to laugh at everything indiscriminately is levity and the height of imprudence. You should never turn into ridicule any of the company, in order to amuse yourself or others at their expense. To do so would be contrary to the dictates of religion, good nature, and ordinary propriety.

Religion, its ministers, ceremonies, and practices, should always be spoken of with great respect and veneration. The faults of an ecclesiastic, whether real or imaginary, should never be made the subject of conversation. The noble sentiments of the Emperor Theodosius ought to be ever present to our mind: "Were I to see an ecclesiastic commit a fault even, I would instantly conceal it beneath my royal mantle."

It manifests a great degree of ill-nature, and a great want of charity, to laugh at the mental or bodily defects

of others. We should remember that we ourselves are full of imperfections, and that our defects, if not exactly similar to those we ridicule, may, perhaps, be more really discreditable. In ridiculing others, people very often only expose their own failings. An uncharitable jest may indeed excite laughter; it can never be the object of admiration.

Walking is another species of amusement, and one that contributes much to the preservation of health. In walking, the most respectable person should be placed in the middle. If there are only two, he should be placed on the right; but when walking in the streets, the person whom you wish to respect, should be placed next the houses. A gentleman in going up stairs with ladies, should precede them; in coming down, they should precede him.

Some young persons, when walking abroad, laugh loudly and almost in the faces of those they meet. What can be a clearer mark of a thoughtless mind, or of an ill-regulated heart? A person of good sense would have a more exalted idea of what is due to his own dignity, and to that of his fellow-beings, than to yield to such buffoonery. Others speak in the streets in a loud voice, as if to attract the attention of the passers-by. This is folly and vanity. The tone of the voice should, at all times, but particularly in the streets, or in mixed society, be moderate, not attracting the notice or disturbing the conversation of others.

Singing is an amusement agreeable to ourselves and to those with whom we associate. The Apostle St. Paul, in two of his Epistles, admonishes Christians to sing psalms and hymns to the glory of the Lord, and to let the heart correspond with the tones of the voice, because they are the praises of the Most High. How desirable that Christians should set to music the words of pious songs, and the psalms and canticles which have been translated into the vernacular language, and sing them occasionally! It would be a great means of preserving within them the spirit of piety, and of cheering them under the trials to which this life is subject.

Much gesture in singing belongs only to actors. In private company, the manner of the singer should harmonize with the words and the intonations of his voice; and while he is careful to avoid everything violent or affected, he should not remain motionless as a statue.

CHAPTER VII.

CONVERSATIONS.

Persons who live in the world, are, by the nature of human affairs, obliged to see and converse frequently with one another. Our conversations, whether of necessity or of amusement, should always be marked by discretion, modesty, and decorum.

We should, according to the advice of the wise man, weigh our words with weights of gold; and as we attach great value to that metal, and use it with economy, so, likewise, should we weigh well the words which we utter, and not use them either extravagantly or imprudently. The good and upright heart suggests pure and virtuous language, while the mouth of the corrupt utters words of death.

Conversation, besides the pleasure which it affords, is one of the easiest and most natural means of acquiring information. It makes us acquainted with men and their opinions, and with much that is useful respecting the transactions and business of the world and the various motives of action by which it is directed and governed. We learn many things which might otherwise escape our observation; and by imparting to us the opinions and sentiments of others, it enables us to form a standard by which we may estimate our own. By the mutual interchange of thought which conversation affords, we add to our stock of information, and make even our recreations contribute to our improvement.

But notwithstanding these manifest advantages, conversation is also productive of very serious evils, as there is nothing in which men permit themselves so much levity and indiscretion. "The tongue, though a little member, is a world of iniquity:" "He who offends not by word, is a perfect man."* David himself prayed that a guard might be placed upon his mouth, to preserve him from the excesses of the tongue. How necessary, then, to make ourselves acquainted with the rules by which it should be regulated.

* St. James, iii.

SECTION I.

TRUTH.

Truth is the first quality that should characterize our language. On no account should a person utter a falsehood, or be guilty of the least dissimulation or duplicity. The holy old man Eleazar preferred death to dissimulation; and St. Cyprian would not allow his life to be preserved at the expense of truth. The early life of the immortal Geo. Washington presents an admirable example of the love of truth; the incident is too well known to require repetition here. A lie is always sinful and degrading; and children, in consequence of not reflecting on the evils resulting from a habit of lying, but too often become familiar with dissimulation—a vice the more dangerous, as in them it frequently disguises itself under the appearance of modesty. “The life of the liar shall be without honor; confusion shall cover his face.” The Prophet David admonishes that, if our days would flow happily, we must be careful not to contract this pernicious and disgraceful habit.

The liar is guilty of many indiscretions, hurtful both to himself and his neighbor; and if, to save his honor, compromised by a falsehood, it be necessary to join perfidy with folly, he hesitates not. The secrets of his friend are revealed; the interests or character of a neighbor, sacrificed; and what follows?—his perfidiousness is soon detected, his reputation tarnished, all confidence in his integrity destroyed; and, if any of his friends are found who continue to confide in him, we may reasonably question their prudence or their sincerity.

Equivocations deserve severe condemnation, because they confound truth with falsehood, and are used for the purpose of shielding the liar from merited reproach. They are a species of falsehood, equally proscribed by uprightness, good manners, and the spirit of the Gospel.

We should never relate news as true, without being well assured of its accuracy. If it is doubtful, we should mention it as such, and no attempt to add to its interest by false or improbable narrations.

In a solemn inquiry, once held by Cardinal Colonna, the word of the youthful Petrarch was as satisfactory to his Eminence as the sworn testimony of the other domestics, because, from his childhood, he was known to have had a sincere regard for truth, and an utter abhorrence of falsehood. “As to you Petrarch,” said the Cardinal, “you

need not swear ; your word suffices." Hence, the advantage of a habit of truthfulness ; but, to acquire this habit, one should make it an inviolable rule to speak the truth with all sincerity, on even the most trivial occasion.

We should be exceedingly careful to redeem, in due time, the promises we may have made ; for few things render a man more contemptible than repeated breaches of fidelity to his word. If, however, honor and good breeding require this fidelity, prudence equally requires that we never make promises without having duly considered their consequences, and guarded against the inconvenience and embarrassment which too great a facility in promising so often occasions.

As good faith and mutual confidence should be at all times the soul of conversation, we should never, even in jest, use disguise or dissimulation.

SECTION II.

MEANS OF RENDERING CONVERSATION AGREEABLE

To profit by conversation, you must guard against absence of mind and inattention to what is said, and must treasure up every sentiment and opinion worth preserving ; while, to render your conversation agreeable to others, you must have your mind well stored with ideas, particularly on those subjects which form the ordinary topics of discourse in society. You must also possess a ready command of appropriate language. To this must be added a certain gracefulness of delivery, without which your opinions, however just, and though couched in the most elegant language, will lose much of their value, and fail to excite that interest to which they may be intrinsically entitled.

Correct pronunciation, grammatical construction of sentences, suitable gestures, earnestness without vehemence, and a certain ease and sweetness, blended with a calm and modest dignity, contribute materially to enforce our opinions, and transfuse our sentiments into the minds and hearts of our hearers.

Few, it is said, possess all that constitutes the correct and agreeable speaker ; but every one can, by reading, observation, and reflection, joined with the desire of rendering himself agreeable, considerably improve his conversational powers, and become a welcome member of every company which his station in society permits him to enter.

Conversation is sometimes rendered dull and uninteresting, through the absence of suitable and pleasing subjects. On going into company, a person should make choice of a few, which, under such circumstances, he may be enabled to introduce. He might also supply himself with a few appropriate anecdotes. These should be short, have connection with the previous remarks, and be suited to the company and tone of conversation. When a subject has once been mooted, and seems to excite general interest, another should not be proposed until that under consideration is exhausted, or ceases to attract attention. Should no other be then brought forward, he may propose one.

Another method of enlivening conversation, and one which in the domestic circle would be exceedingly valuable, is for one person to read a paragraph or two from a book, continuing until some opinion or sentiment elicits remark, and becomes the subject of discourse. The reading should then be discontinued, its object having been attained. Should the conversation again grow dull, the reading may be resumed until a similar effect is reproduced. Conversations of hours' continuance, and of a very improving character, have frequently been known to originate in such expedients.

Some portion of the conversation will always, by a person really polite, be addressed individually to each member of the company. This tends to keep alive the interest of all, and to compliment each by the attention which is paid him.

You should be reserved in the company of those with whose character, profession, or circumstances in life you are unacquainted, lest you say anything calculated to wound or give offence. Several very disagreeable and embarrassing incidents have occurred through want of this precaution. When once introduced to a person, you should endeavor not to forget his name, that, in any future interview, you may know how to address him.

SECTION III.

PROFANE AND UNCHARITABLE LANGUAGE.

Persons are sometimes to be met with who make a boast of their incredulity and irreligion. The word of God itself does not escape their infamous raillery. The society of such should be shunned: for, as St. Paul says, "evil communications corrupt good morals." The state of such nominal

Christians is truly deplorable ; for they glory in their sin, and make the holy things of God the objects of their ribaldry.

Oaths, blasphemies, and imprecations should not only be banished from conversation, but the company of those who utter them cautiously shunned. There are other expressions, too, though not equally criminal, from which you should carefully abstain ; such as using on every occasion, and without due respect, the holy name of God, forms of expression resembling oaths, &c. The profound reverence which every Christian should have for that almighty Being who made and governs the universe, cannot tolerate the thoughtlessness and levity with which his holy name is so often pronounced. Such levity leads to indifference, and often ends in habitual profaneness. It is unnecessary to add, that conversations which tend in the slightest degree, either directly or indirectly, to wound Christian modesty, should neither be used nor tolerated. A virtuous person would shudder at the very thought of hearkening to such discourse.

It is contrary to true politeness, as well as to Christian charity, to speak ill of your neighbors. Slander, although unhappily so common in discourse, is not less criminal, nor less an indication of a base and envious soul, replete with bitterness, revenge, or malignity. To repeat what you have heard from the mouth of the slanderer is very criminal. We should view the matter in question in the most favorable light ; believe there must have been some mistake ; and remain silent when you cannot possibly excuse. To "do to others as you would wish they should do to you," is a maxim containing all that is necessary to guide your conduct relative to your neighbor's reputation—a maxim often repeated, but seldom acted upon.

You should abstain from injurious or humiliating comparisons. It is impolite and unfeeling to say that such or such a one is lame, humpbacked, and so forth, in the presence of persons who may be afflicted with a similar deformity. You should be still more cautious not to upbraid those with whom you converse, with the faults or follies to which they may have yielded, or with the disgraceful circumstances in which they may have been placed. Every injurious or contemptuous word is opposed to the injunctions of our blessed Lord, who declares that he who says, to his brother, "thou fool," is deserving of hell-fire. Irony, too, in addressing others, or speaking of them, should not be indulged in ; and mimicry should be altogether avoided.

“Mimicry, the favorite amusement of little minds, has ever been the contempt of great ones. Never be guilty of it yourself, nor encourage it in others. It is the most illiberal of all buffoonery. It insults the person you mimic, and insults are seldom forgotten.”

If jesting be permitted, it should never be applied to holy things or to natural defects; nor should it attack reputation, merit, or the memory of the dead. It may, indeed, be innocent, and, no doubt, often is; but to be such, with how many precautions must it not be accompanied! It is so difficult to jest without violating both charity and politeness, that it would be well that jesting were altogether banished from society; moreover, when the habit of jesting is once formed, politeness, the feelings, and even the reputation of others, are too often sacrificed to its indulgence. The habitual jester is generally disliked. He often excites merriment, but seldom, if ever, admiration.

SECTION IV.

DISCRETION IN THE USE OF WORDS.

To speak indiscreetly, is to speak without reflection on every subject that presents itself, to speak when you should be silent, or to utter foolish or extravagant things. Those who speak much, are generally inconsiderate in their language; the desire of speaking causes them to deal out fooleries; and it rarely happens that much talk is not attended with many faults. A restraint should be placed on the tongue if you have not sufficient understanding to comprehend what is said, or know not what to reply. You should observe the times in which you may, without indiscretion, join in the conversation; for it is levity and imprudence to express your ideas every time you feel an impulse to do so. All your words should, as the Apostle advises, be accompanied with grace and seasoned with wisdom. In fine, you should speak only of what you know, and be silent as to matters of which you are ignorant. Besides, it should be remembered, that conversation does not consist in mere talk.

To listen discreetly, avoiding whatever would betray absence of mind or inattention, is a matter of no small importance. The most refined and agreeable compliment you can pay to others, is to appear interested in what they

say. The best rule for young persons in society is to listen a great deal; to speak but little, and that little always to the purpose. The babbling of a young man is exceedingly indecorous. How silly to vent the thoughts incessantly in useless words!

Avoid the use of long paraphrases in saying what might be concisely expressed; or involving the principal object in a number of irrelevant incidents.

Talking of yourself in company is an impertinence. Your affairs are nothing to them, nor can they be kept too secret. As to the affairs of others, what are they to you? In talking of matters that no way concern you, you are liable to commit blunders; and should you wound any one's feelings, you may possibly lose his esteem. It is an intolerable vanity in a person to praise himself, or to contrast himself or his conduct with the person or conduct of any individual. Those airs, too, of presumption and self-sufficiency, which are so frequently assumed for the purpose of impressing others with an idea of one's importance, defeat their own object, and excite the ridicule or contempt of those who are constrained to witness them. "Let another praise thee, not thy own mouth," says Solomon; "a stranger, not thy own lips." A man who praises himself, shows clearly that he is undeserving of praise.

But, though silent in regard to himself, he should not be silent respecting the virtue and merit of others, taking care, however, to banish from his commendation every thing savoring of adulation and flattery. The praises bestowed upon you should be received with modesty and thankfulness. It would be folly to get into ill-humor with those from whom you receive applause, particularly if it were merited by any action, the natural goodness of which you could not well conceal.

There are some who take offence at the praises bestowed on others, or endeavor to derogate from them by allusion to their foibles and weaknesses. You should never be guilty of this fault; you should rather add, if in your power, to the praises bestowed. If you cannot speak well of the individual in question, you ought to be silent regarding him, unless justice or charity evidently require you make known your opinion of him.

You should not speak either of the present or the absent in terms of excessive praise; neither should we, from a desire of commending any one, offend against truth. If our relations are praised for any good qualities they may possess, or any good deed they may have performed, we

should modestly testify our gratitude, but not indulge our vanity by adding to their praises.

We should not, on seeing a thing for the first time, give vent to our feelings by extravagant exclamations of surprise or admiration. As a general rule, we ought to be reserved and moderate in awarding praise; and should appreciate things according to their real value, that our esteem and praise of them may be consistent with the rules of prudence and discretion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPORTUNATE AND CONTENTIOUS.

Nothing can be more insipid and disagreeable than the conversation of those importunate talkers, who put questions continually on the most trifling things, or on those of which they should remain ignorant. We should never put direct questions to a person when we have reason to think he would feel a delicacy in answering them. Even inquiries relative to health should be made in an indirect form, so as to leave the individual at liberty to give such a reply as suits his inclination.

There is another description of rude and troublesome persons—travellers, who speak of nothing but their adventures, the countries through which they have travelled, the real or pretended dangers they have encountered; continuing to repeat the same circumstances a hundred times over. Another class, at every phrase, ask, "Do you understand?" This is exceedingly rude. They should finish what they have to say, and then, if they perceive that they have been misunderstood, they should repeat it. Every speaker should articulate distinctly, and abstain from the use of obscure, ambiguous, or equivocal expressions.

It is an act of politeness briefly to mention the subject of conversation to those who enter a company. You should not interrupt him who speaks, but wait calmly until he has finished what he had to say, and then reply; neither should you be the first to answer a question not particularly addressed to you, until you shall have given to others sufficient opportunity of replying.

It would be unpardonable rudeness to say of a subject in debate, "It is not true;" "You do not understand the matter;" "I have my own opinion still;" and so forth. A polite person would say: "I think you must have been misinformed as to the facts;" "It may possibly be a mis-

take ;” “ I thought it was otherwise,” or some observation of a similar character. He might also let the matter rest, or change the subject of discourse, unless duty or charity require that he maintain his opinion.

If the views of an individual differ from those of every member of a company, he should be silent, or state his opinions with great modesty, but should not obstinately defend them. He may also state his reasons for holding those opinions, but he should never betray obstinate attachment to them. The fact of their being thus generally opposed, is not, certainly, a decided proof of their inaccuracy, but is at least a strong presumptive argument why he should mistrust them.

The Apostle St. Paul admonishes his disciple, St. Timothy, to avoid all dissensions. The spirit of contention is directly opposed to the meekness so strongly recommended in the Gospel. It is equally contrary to the spirit and usages of polite society. Disputes spring from presumption, and from the false idea which people entertain of their own merit and ability. Some persons dispute about every thing. When any one expresses an opinion, this is to them the signal for argument. How odious and despicable ! The only mode of dealing with such characters is to be silent, or to avoid their company. To oppose them is to add fuel to the fire, and supply them with materials for contention. A wise and prudent man will never contend with such persons.

You should never oppose the opinions of others without solid reasons, nor should you enter into an argument merely to gratify the desire of disputing. When obliged to argue, you should do so with all possible sweetness, ever remembering the words of the wise man, that sweet words multiply friends and conciliate enemies. You should, in the first instance, express how far you agree with the opinions just advanced, and show great reluctance to refuse your entire assent. You should then politely, and in language and manner perfectly inoffensive, state the reasons of your dissent, carefully abstaining from all airs of superiority, and never indulging in the glory of a triumph.

You have been told of a person of dignified station, that when he feels it his duty to oppose the opinions, even of his inferiors, he first considers calmly what each has said, pointing out every thing that appears to be reasonable, and, having done full justice to every opinion, he then politely introduces his own. This amiable condescension, whilst it gives weight and authority to his decisions, inspires

sontiments of respect, veneration, and love. He whose sole object is to establish or vindicate truth, is amply requited when that object is attained.

You should not interrupt another while speaking, in order to comment on what he narrates, or render it less ambiguous or inaccurate. If you have any observations to offer, you may, of course, do so, but not until he has finished. He who finds that he has detended an erroneous opinion, or committed a mistake in the recital of a narration, should never hesitate to acknowledge his error. He should receive with candor and gratitude the corrections which may be made, and never take offence at observations tending to set him right.

CHAPTER IX.

COMPLIMENTS.

Compliments, to be really valuable, must be the fruit of sincerity and good feeling, free from coldness or indifference, on the one hand; and from flattery and adulation on the other.

" 'Tis an old maxim in the schools,
That flattery's the food of fools "

Some, in paying a compliment, do it in so awkward a manner, that they frequently excite pain when they intend to give pleasure.

Compliments should be well-timed, suited to the person and to the occasion, and should be seldom offered directly, but, as much as possible, by inference, by either a hint or a comparison. In compliments of condolence on the death of a dear relative, or the loss of a considerable property or law-suit, much should not be said on the cause of the affliction. You should, by gradually withdrawing the mind to other objects, or by the delicate introduction of some consoling reflections, alleviate the mental anguish which the sufferer is enduring.

The maxim of the wise man, that we should not praise a man before his death, does not mean that we are never to use compliments, nor utter words of commendation. It merely intimates that we should measure well the praises we bestow, for they, but too frequently, serve as mere incentives to the gratification of vanity.

Compliments dictated by artifice or adulation should never be offered, for they bespeak a deceitful heart. Affectation in the manner of giving them should likewise be

avoided. Your whole manner should be so faithful an expression of the sentiments you utter, as to leave no room to doubt of their sincerity.

The person to whom a compliment is paid, should accept it unaffectedly and thankfully, without manifesting any very great satisfaction, or yet betraying the least symptom of indifference.

It may here be remarked, that your language should, on all occasions, be pure, simple, and intelligible—free from foreign, obsolete or vulgar phrases. If a chaste, correct, and beautiful style of speaking be acquired in early life, it may easily be retained ever after; but negligence or indifference in youth, either in the choice of words, or the manner of arranging them, will not, without much difficulty, be overcome in riper years. A person remarkable for the accuracy and elegance of his expressions, being asked by a friend how he had attained so valuable an acquisition, replied, that from his boyhood he had accustomed himself to speak correctly, and that it had now become quite natural, and required no effort whatever. He concluded by saying, that to speak incorrectly, would, he believed, cost him as much pain, as it would a negligent speaker to express himself with accuracy and propriety. "Choose that which is best; custom will render it easy and agreeable."

CHAPTER X.

ON READING.

Having in a preceding chapter alluded to the necessity of possessing a store of useful knowledge, we shall now speak of the means by which that knowledge is to be acquired. Much valuable information may be obtained by conversation itself, if you only know how to select companions, to listen with attention to what is said, and to lead the person with whom you converse, to the subject in which he is most interested, or with which, from his station, circumstances, or the direction of his studies, he must be best acquainted. This, however, is not always easily effected; but books, observation, and reflection, together with occasional lectures on the subject with which you desire to be acquainted, will soon put you in possession of a large fund of information, which, by industry, may be daily augmented.

Of all the recreations that can be enjoyed, or the sources of knowledge to which a young person may have access, books are, doubtless, the most innocent and valuable. No day should pass without profiting of the advantages which they afford. Your observation may be limited; your opportunities of conversation few; your circle of intelligent friends small; but books are always available. By them you are made acquainted with events that have occurred in the remotest times and most distant places; with the opinions and sentiments of the wise of every generation; with the rise and fall of states, and the causes which have facilitated their progress or decline; with the discoveries of science at every period of its history; and the lives of individuals, who, by their abilities, prudence, or industry, have raised themselves to eminence in their respective professions. By them, too, you are made acquainted with the history of religion in each successive age; with her glorious triumphs over the enemies that have assailed her; with the actions of her illustrious children, who elevating themselves above the interests of this perishable world, aspired to the glory of an eternal kingdom, leaving us in the remembrance of their virtue and its rewards, a powerful incitement to imitate their example, that we may, hereafter, be made partakers of their happiness. By books, in fine, you receive light, instruction, and amusement, enriching your mind with the labors of those who have gone before us, and making your knowledge of their actions a guide to direct your own. The love of reading should, then, be fondly cherished, and some book kept always near at hand, to which your leisure moments may be profitably devoted.

Additional profit may be derived from reading by taking extracts from the books you read, or again by writing down the name of the book and noting its principal pages, that you may refer to them from time to time. An author has said that to read without writing is to be guilty of downright folly.

The first and most important of all kinds of knowledge is that of religion. A young person should remember, that all his efforts in this world should tend only to the attainment of happiness in a higher sphere of enjoyment; and that all his acquired knowledge is but a faint, transient gleam, when contrasted with that flood of light which shall be poured in upon his mind in that celestial dwelling where he shall see God face to face, and in that blissful vision eternally rejoice. He should, therefore, be well acquainted

with the truths of religion, and the reasons on which they are based, that he may possess sufficient evidence of the truth for the perfect satisfaction of his own mind ; be prepared to give, on all fitting occasions, an account of the faith that is in him ; and be proof against the railleries of the scoffer and the sneers of the infidel. Nor should he confine his religious knowledge to the doctrines of the Church alone ; he should, by the daily reading of some practical, religious book, learn how to regulate his conduct ; and should endeavor to keep alive in his heart, that spirit of piety and devotion, which intercourse with the world and the hurry of business are too apt to weaken.

A young person, on leaving school, was placed in an office, in which conversations dangerous to faith and morals were of daily recurrence. In some instances he was directly and openly attacked for what were impiously designated the absurdities of his belief. Fortunately for him, he had been well instructed in the truths of religion, and had, from childhood, been obedient to its dictates. His faith remained firm and his morals untainted in circumstances so trying, that one less instructed, or less virtuous, might, in all probability, have yielded to their influence. He is now placed in a respectable position in society, and has been amply rewarded, even in this world, for his fidelity to the religious principles, of which he gave this early proof.

The next kind of information which a young man should seek, is that which immediately concerns his trade or profession, because a thorough knowledge of his business, when combined with an upright character, is the surest means of attaining comfort and independence. To this, however, he should not confine himself. He should also endeavor to enlarge his mental sources of enjoyment, by the acquisition of a liberal share of literary and scientific knowledge. What a vast source of innocent and rational pleasures is thus laid open before him ! As soon as he has acquired the principles of science, and imbibed a taste for the beauties of literature, he cannot view a building, look up to the heavens, or open a book, without experiencing a delight, which, in a state of ignorance, he would never enjoy.

It is to be regretted that young persons do not more generally appreciate the advantages of an early acquisition of knowledge. They waste time at the very period when it can be most profitably employed : when information may be acquired, and habits of study formed, which would promote their welfare and happiness in after-life. They cannot

be too often reminded, that youth is the time in which knowledge can most easily be acquired ; that what is then learned, is always the longest retained ; and that the constant occupation of the mind in early years is, with the grace of God, one of the best preservatives of that pure morality without which neither wealth, station, nor intellect, can confer either happiness or genuine respectability.

Parents and masters, often discourage reading, under the pretext that it interferes with business. If the love of books degenerates into a passion, and if that time is spent in reading which should be devoted to the duties of one's calling, then such discouragement is perfectly rational ; but when reading is confined to the hours not allotted to business, and that the books read are safe and unobjectionable, what amusement can possibly be so harmless, nay, so useful ? How many by reading have been considerably assisted in their trade or profession, and have thus laid the foundation of their future fortune !

A working carpenter has been known, who, having received a very limited education in his youth, rose every morning at an early hour, and, after morning prayer, devoted the time which intervened between that and the usual hour of work, to studies connected with his trade, such as geometry, drawing, mechanics, and so forth. In a few years he, by his superior knowledge, raised himself to a state of comparative respectability, and in some time after, without in the least interfering with his ordinary avocations, he acquired so large a fund of valuable information, as to obtain from those who knew him, a high character for intelligence.

CHAPTER XI. — (SUPPLEMENTARY).

ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

In nothing, perhaps, does a young person stand more in need of a judicious and an intelligent friend, than in the selection of books. On the choice made of them, depends the good or evil of which they may be productive. A great number of modern books contain gross misstatements regarding some of the most important events of our own and former times ; whilst a still greater number are replete with such anti-christian and irreligious sentiments, that, to read them, is to expose faith and morals to the most imminent

peril. At no period of life can such works be read without danger ; but in youth, particularly, before the mind is well grounded in solid principles, and the heart formed to the love and practice of virtue, awful, indeed, are the consequences to which the reading of them must lead.

There are three classes of books, in particular, against which the youthful reader should be seriously warned : those that endanger faith ; those which corrupt the heart ; and, finally, those light, ephemeral, and worthless productions, which serve only to fritter away time, and unfit the mind for any serious study or occupation.

Faith is the foundation of every virtue. " Without it, it is impossible to please God." Its truths, resting on his veracity, require our entire and unwavering assent. Whatever tends to subvert or even weaken it, should be regarded with abhorrence ; and yet how many works calculated to destroy its influence, and shake our confidence in its evidences, are constantly issuing from an infidel press, and are seized with avidity by many of our youthful readers.

The experience of the last eighty years furnishes ample testimony of the evils such books have caused :—the prospects of individuals blasted ; the peace of families destroyed ; the most horrible excesses perpetrated ; a mighty nation revolutionized ; the whole frame of society unhinged ; and the blood of Europe poured out upon her plains for a quarter of a century :—all feelingly convince us of the malignity of their influence. The youth who values his *own* happiness and that of society, or who is desirous of promoting his eternal interests, must never yield to the temptation of reading works of a dangerous or an irreligious tendency.

Books which taint the purity of morals are many,—even more, numerous than those dangerous to faith. They can be procured in every city ; they often find their way even into the bosom of well-regulated families ; they arrest the attention of the youthful reader, inflaming his passions in the retirement of home, and instilling their poison so silently, yet so effectually, that they often corrupt their victim before he perceives their malignity. A boy, on leaving school, is remarkable for his modest and unassuming manners ; his respect and veneration for his parents ; his affectionate kindness to his brothers and sisters ; his devout frequentation of the sacraments ; and his regular and edifying discharge of every religious duty. A change comes on ; the good impressions of his boyhood are gradually effaced ; his neglect of business becomes daily more apparent ; he no longer attends to his religious duties ; and, in the end,

he becomes a reprobate. To one bad book, incautiously read, may be traced his first deviations from the path of rectitude in which he had trodden from childhood. Had some friendly voice been raised in time to warn him against reading that bad book, he might probably have persevered till death in piety and innocence.

Nor is it alone against immoral works that the youthful reader should be cautioned. The reading of light, frivolous, and trashy productions should also be discountenanced. Works of this character waste time, enervate the mind, unfit it for serious and profitable study, and leave little behind, save a weakened memory, and an understanding ill suited to the realities of life. This is the more to be deplored, as there are so many works, such as history, biography, geography, and so forth, which contain a large store of information, and are at the same time highly interesting.

A lady who gave much attention to the training up of her children, never permitted them, when the season of childhood was passed, to read works of fiction. She supplied them with the narratives from the Holy Scripture, biographies of the good and the great, who might serve as models of virtue or of industry; and gradually directed their minds to the study of scientific works suited to their youthful capacities. They grew up an intelligent and well-ordered family, remarkable for their good sense and practical intelligence. A reverse of fortune soon showed the value of the training they had received. Their education became to them a source of income, which enabled them to surmount with honor and independence the difficulties of their position.

What books, then, may be recommended to the intelligent reader? It is impossible, in a brief work of this kind, to point out all that may be found worthy of his perusal.

Among the many religious works are:—Abp. Kenrick's *Vindication of the Catholic Church*; *Writings of Fenelon*; *Cardinal Wiseman's Doctrine of the Catholic Church*, and his *Lectures on the Eucharist*; Abp. Manning's *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*; *Religion in Society*, by Martinet; Abp. Spalding's *Evidences of Catholicity*; *Father Hecker's Questions of the Soul*; *Rome, its Rules and Institutions*, by J. F. Maguire; *McLeod's History of the Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in North America*; *Abbé Orsini's Life of the Blessed Virgin*, translated by Mrs. J. Sadlier; *Bossuet's Exposition of the Doctrines of the Catholic Church*; *Dr. Challoner's Catholic Christian Instructed*; *De la Salle's Duties of a Christian*; *Faber's Bethlehem*, Foot

of the Cross, All for Jesus, &c.; Gobinet's Instructions for Youth; Introduction to a Devout Life, by St. Francis de Sales; Liguori's Christian Virtues, Glories of Mary, and The Commandments and Sacraments; The Sinner's Guide by Father Lewis of Granada; Allies' See of St. Peter; The Year of Mary; Think well On't; The Blessed Eucharist our Greatest Treasure; The Spiritual Combat; The Following of Christ; The Lives of the Saints; &c., &c.

These and numberless others of a like nature will instruct the reader in the doctrines of his religion and teach him its obligations and its practice.

Some persons object to the Lives of the Saints, as a work of general instruction, because the actions therein recorded are not in some instances objects of imitation, and might deter ordinary Christians from entering on a life of piety. It is true, indeed, that God has raised up in his Church, at every period of her history, chosen servants, whose heroic deeds and noble sacrifices, fill us with astonishment, but whose example, in many of their actions, we are not required, nor even permitted, to follow. The reading of their "Lives" is, nevertheless, extremely useful. It shows us what weak nature, aided by divine grace, is able to accomplish; and it stimulates us to discharge with fidelity the comparatively little which God requires of us, in our respective stations, seeing how much has been done by persons like ourselves, to attain that everlasting happiness which we hope one day to enjoy. Hence, it cannot fail to be productive of great and permanent advantages.

Among the books containing much interesting historic and literary information are the following:—Reeve's History of the Bible, and of the Christian Church; Darras' General History of the Church; Spalding's History of the Reformation, and his Miscellanea; Balmes' Protestantism and Catholicity compared; Shea's Catholic Missions in the United States; Marshall's History of the Christian Missions; Bossuet's Universal History; Rollin's Ancient History; Fredet's Ancient and Modern History; Bancroft's History of the United States; MacGeoghegan's, Haverty's, O'Halloran's, or McGee's History of Ireland; or again, the excellent Illustrated History of Ireland by a member of the Poor Clares; Lingard's History of England; Chateaubriand's Genius of Christianity, by Dr. White; Maguire's Irish in America; Father Meehan's Lives of O'Neill and O'Donel; Life of St. Patrick by an Irish Priest; Life of St. Columba, and the Monks of the West, by the Count de Montalembert; The British Catholic Poets; Cham-

ber's Cyclopædia of English Literature; Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres; *Selections* from Addison and other English Essayists.

For an occasional reading during leisure hours, and so forth, we cannot too earnestly recommend the excellent monthly magazine entitled "The Catholic World." This periodical, so highly praised by the entire press of the United States, is a real treasure to all those who have the good fortune to be subscribers.

The beautiful and entertaining histories to be found in the Illustrated Catholic Sunday-School Library, Brother James's Library, Young Catholic's Library, Sister Mary's Library, Sadlier's Fireside Library, Young People's Library, Parochial and Sunday-School Library, The Cottage and Parlor Library, &c., besides affording agreeable reading-matter, will leave salutary impressions on the minds of our youth who peruse them.

The youthful reader should be warned against the ordinary fault of attempting to read many books. A few, well and thoroughly read, will supply him with more useful knowledge, and will prepare his mind better for future acquisitions, than a great number read cursorily and superficially. To read, then, with advantage, he should choose a judicious guide to direct him in the choice of books, and read none without having first ascertained their character. Above all he should never read novels, romances, and the like. To peruse these and other light works that are being daily poured forth from the press, not only wastes time, but, what is far worse, as was said on a preceding page, weakens the mind and tarnishes the soul. It is melancholy to think of the amount of trash over which so many fine intellects are constantly being debased. He should read slowly, attentively, with reflection, and something every day; and though he may have but few books, and little time to devote to them, he will very soon acquire a large fund of knowledge, and be able every day to add to his intellectual store.

CHAPTER XII.—(SUPPLEMENTARY.)

ON LETTER WRITING.

So frequent are the occasions on which it may be necessary to communicate our thoughts in writing, that young persons should spare no pains to acquire a facility in English composition. This facility is productive of many advantages. Besides the reflecting tone which it gives to

the mind, and the great accuracy of expression to which it habituates, it is highly gratifying to its possessor, a source of delight to those with whom he corresponds, and not unfrequently a means of contributing to his own personal advancement.

A young man, possessing some knowledge of business, and nothing else, save a few letters of reference, entered one of our cities, a few years since, in quest of employment. Seeing in one of the newspapers an advertisement, announcing that an assistant was wanted in a mercantile establishment, he applied for the situation by letter, stating his capabilities for the vacant situation. On ascertaining that the candidate was the writer of the letter, the proprietor of the establishment at once engaged him. Another having written an article for one of the public journals which attracted some notice, obtained by its means, shortly after, a comparatively lucrative employment. Instances, too, have occurred in which, by means of written appeals, the interests of public and private charities have been materially promoted, and even human life preserved.

The interchange of thought and feeling, of which letters are the medium, is productive of one of the most rational and delightful of our enjoyments. He who has felt the pangs of separation from home and kindred, can best appreciate the balm to the wounded spirit which an affectionate letter administers; and they who have felt and mourned his absence, best can tell how great their delight to learn, from his own hand, that he is well and happy, after having escaped all the imaginary dangers which their affectionate anxieties had created. The pleasures and advantages, then, which letters afford, should influence youth to devote to this important and useful accomplishment some portion of the spring-time of life, when a chaste and beautiful style can be most easily acquired.

To write well, two things are necessary: a knowledge of the principles of grammar, and some familiarity with good English writers. If a young man has not learned grammar at school, he should apply himself to study it. He who has no knowledge of grammar, can neither speak nor write without betraying his ignorance, and exposing himself to the sneers and derisions of the captious or the uncharitable; and no amount of good sense can entirely compensate for the want of it.

Among the several methods of acquiring a good and pleasing style, transcription is strongly recommended. Reproducing a paragraph from memory, immediately after having read it, then comparing it with the original, and

continuing it until a near resemblance is produced, is another excellent means of attaining this object. This, however, requires patience, and a perseverance not always to be met with. The most practical method, provided the individual can spell correctly and construct sentences grammatically, seems to be, to write his own reflections on any subject he may have been reading, with such facts as may lead to its illustration. This, continued from day to day, can not fail to give great facility in the practice of composition, and would tend to fix permanently in the mind, the subjects on which it had been exercised.

The style should be simple, natural, and interesting, free from everything affected or pedantic, and suited to the subject and to the person addressed. With superiors, it should be grave and respectful; with inferiors, affable and kind; and with equals, particularly our friends and kindred, it should be easy, lively, and agreeable. Our letters ought faithfully express what we would say to our correspondents were we speaking to them. They ought, however, to be written in terms more polite if possible than those used in conversation, because in writing we can more easily weigh our expressions than in speaking.

As to the arrangement,—if the letter is to be written on several topics, the most important should be reserved for the last, so that the interest of the reader may be gradually increased, and carried to its full height towards the close. This, however, is subject to much modification, and must, in a great measure, depend on circumstances, and on the turn of thought of the writer. When all the subjects are well considered before one begins to write, each will be likely to find its most appropriate place; and there will be no difficulty in the selection of suitable expressions, when a person possesses a clear view of his subject, and has been for some time exercised in the reading of good writers, or in the practice of composition.

Letters of business should be short, precise, and unequivocal; no preambles, no long details, everything clearly and distinctly stated, so as to leave no doubt of the intentions of the writer, and no room for future misunderstanding or litigation.

A letter requiring an answer should receive a prompt reply. On this point politeness requires despatch.

The folding of a letter is a matter of consequence. The most convenient and most generally adopted is that of enclosing the letter in an envelope. In this case, the letter should be neatly folded to about the size of the envelope.

and when enclosed sealed with red wax ; black wax is used when the writer is in mourning. Wafers are generally used for business letters.

It may here be observed, that on no account should any one read a sealed or unsealed letter not addressed to him. The secret of letters is sacred. If a letter, addressed to another, be found open, the finder should seal it and forward it to the party addressed. You should not pick up a letter or other paper dropped in your presence, but merely point it out to its owner.

From what has been said, it is abundantly evident, that the writer of a letter should consider well beforehand what he intends to write ; should arrange his subjects in order, but without formality ; that the style should be simple, unaffected, and suited to the subject, the folding and the sealing neat, and the signature and address written plainly and legibly. Attention to these things in early life will soon be formed into a habit, and prevent much waste of time in after years. It will render his letter a welcome gift to his friends, and impress on his correspondents a favorable opinion of his politeness and ability.

CHAPTER XIII.—(SUPPLEMENTARY.)

ON THE CHOICE OF COMPANIONS.

Fortunate would it have been for many now living, had some warning voice admonished them when young, to be careful in the selection of companions. All that has been said of books, may with equal truth be applied to associates. They influence, in a great degree, our temporal, and even our eternal, welfare. We adopt their principles, imbibe their sentiments, contract their habits, and often imperceptibly imitate their conduct. If good, they stimulate us to the practice of virtue ; if bad, they draw us into the very depths of vice. It is related of a young man, that while at school he preserved an irreproachable character, but mixing afterwards in bad society, he became notoriously wicked, and died in despair, refusing the helps and consolations of religion ; and of another, who, having abandoned himself to a sinful life, was, without a moment's warning, struck dead in the midst of his excesses. Many of the evils existing among the younger portion of society, and many of the bad habits, and consequent misfortune of the more advanced, may, in some instances, be traced to the influence of bad company.

Companions are frequently chosen on account of some agreeable qualities, and these sometimes of a very superficial and dangerous character; whilst those of intrinsic excellence, and which alone can render a companion truly valuable, are either forgotten or disregarded. A good and safe companion is indeed a treasure, but to be such how many moral and intellectual qualities are required! He should be a consoler in affliction: a counsellor in doubt; a shield in temptation; a visible guardian angel—guiding, encouraging, and sustaining in the pursuit of virtue; ever keeping, amidst the allurements of worldly vanities, the eye of his young associate turned to that "better land," to which this is but a passage, and in which all his youthful sacrifices shall be recompensed with an eternity of happiness.

A young person's first and most ordinary associates should be the members of his own family. He should study to make home agreeable to himself, and to each of its inmates, and be persuaded that the happiness which he there enjoys, is purer and better than any he can find elsewhere. How much may a young man do in the bosom of his family, particularly if he be one of its elder members, to promote its happiness, and contribute to its welfare. He can comfort his parents in their domestic cares and anxieties; instruct and guide his brothers and sisters in the paths of virtue and of knowledge; he can, by his kindness, courtesy, and polite attentions, increase the happiness of each individual member of the household; and, by his encouragement of reciprocal kindness, draw closer the ties of natural affection, which bind them all together. He can, at the same time, enjoy that purest of earthly delights, the consciousness of having discharged an exalted duty; and be a sharer, to a large extent, in the happiness resulting from the peace, union, and harmony which he will have been instrumental in establishing. Happy, indeed, the family that possesses such a member. He is precious as gold, and "as things brought from afar," he is worthy the regard of angels and men.

If, besides the resources of enjoyment which he has in his family and in his books, a young man seek other companions, he must be very select in his choice, if he would escape the dangers to which society exposes him. His companions must be few, or they will often prevent him from paying due attention to his business; not much above him in station, or they will lead him into extravagant expenses; free from ignorance or vulgarity, or he will soon

abandon them, or reduce himself to their level; virtuous, or they will lead him into vice; and practically religious, or they will, by their maxims and conduct, draw him from that regular attention to religious duties, without which he cannot preserve the friendship of God, nor lay up treasures for eternity.

Let the young, then, choose companions if they will, but let them be such only as are worthy of their esteem and confidence; such as will not only promote their welfare but contribute to their improvement; and whilst adding, by their affectionate sympathies, to the pleasures of this life, will encourage the discharge of those social and religious duties on which salvation so much depends. Examples of such companionship, though not ordinary, are yet sometimes found.

Two young persons, who had formed a strong attachment, read, every morning, a portion of the same book. When they met in the evening they walked together, and made their morning reading the first subject of their conversation. They thus acquired a large amount of useful knowledge, and were enlightened by each other's reflections. Their companionship became so great a source of delight to both, that they looked for no other beyond their respective families. They are now advanced in life, and both look back on the evenings thus spent, as the happiest in their life. Companionship such as this would be of inestimable value. It would enlighten the understanding, improve the heart, lay the foundation of virtuous sentiments, and of peaceful and retiring habits. In such companionship there would be no loss of time, no neglect of business, no estrangement from family, no frequenting of taverns, no extravagant expenses, no danger of corruption, no risk of salvation, nor any of those vain, dangerous, and often criminal amusements, which the young unfortunately indulge in, and of which, sooner or later, many become the victims.

"Let every one carefully avoid bad company," says M. Collet, "for in bad company the innocent become perverse, and the wicked are confirmed in their disorders. Such as associate with the wicked must expect to be involved in their fate.

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. A little leaven corrupts the whole paste. The grace of Baptism, which has regenerated us; the sacrament of Confirmation, which has given us the Holy Ghost, with the abundance of his gifts; Penance, which, re-establish-

ing our strength, has communicated to us a fresh supply; the flesh of Jesus Christ, which, to speak the language of the holy Fathers, has deified us; all these favors have made us *children of God*, and placed between us and the *children of darkness* a barrier which shall subsist eternally. What agreement, then, can exist between justice and iniquity, between light and darkness, between Jesus Christ and Belial?

“ Rely not on your virtues, nor on the natural horror you feel for certain excesses. In a week or two, perhaps in a single day, or even less, the edifice which you thought the most solidly established, may be undermined.

“ Alipius, so celebrated in the ‘Confessions’ of St. Augustine, had naturally an extreme horror of those cruel spectacles in which the Romans took a savage delight. Some young friends of his, who, like himself, were studying the law, having met him accidentally, resolved to conduct him to the amphitheatre. They laid hold of him with that sort of violence which friendship seems to authorize; but he said to them: ‘you may force my body and place me on the steps of the circus, but you cannot control either my mind or my eyes, which shall assuredly take no part in the spectacle. Thus I shall be there as if I were absent; and by this means I shall be superior to the violence which you offer me, and the passion which enslaves you.’ Despite these protestations, Alipius was dragged to the spectacle, and while the whole amphitheatre abandoned itself to these barbarous pleasures, Alipius forbade his heart to take any part in them, and kept his eyes shut. ‘And would to God,’ says St. Augustine, to whom we are indebted for this account, ‘that he had kept his ears shut also; for, hearing a loud cry, he yielded so far to curiosity as to open his eyes; but that was enough to inflict on his soul a far more deadly wound than that which a combatant had just then received.’ Thus his heart, more presumptuous than strong, and weak in proportion as it relied on itself rather than on God, was in a moment grievously wounded. Cruelty crept into it at the bare sight of blood; and Alipius, instead of turning away his eyes from the sanguinary spectacle, kept them fixed intently upon it. Drinking down ferocity in large draughts without perceiving it, he became intoxicated with this brutal pleasure, and was no longer the same man who had been carried thither by force, but a man of the same character as those who composed the assembly. He returned home with such ardor for these inhuman spectacles, that he longed for nothing more than to

be present at them; and not only was he desirous of going to the amphitheatre again, but he even conducted others to it.

“After such a relapse,’ continues St. Augustine, ‘what could help him to rise but the hand of thy mercy, O my God! and this alone effected it. Thou didst teach him to confide no more in any other than in thyself, and never to depend upon his own strength; but it was not till long after. However, he always preserved the bitter recollection of this occurrence, which, while it recalled to his remembrance his past weakness, served him as a preservative against future frailties.’”

The pious and learned Rollin* proposes the holy friendship which subsisted between St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil for the instruction of young persons. “They had,” he says, “all the qualifications that make children amiable: beauty of person, charms of mind, mildness, and politeness of manners.

“Their education was such as may be imagined in families where piety was hereditary, if I may be allowed the expression; and whose fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and grandfathers, on both sides, were saints.

“The happy dispositions with which God had been pleased to favor them, they cultivated with all care and assiduity. After they had completed their studies at home, they were sent separately into the cities of Greece which were then in greatest repute for learning, and placed under the tuition of the most excellent masters.

“At last they met again at Athens. We know that this city was then the theatre and centre of polite learning and erudition. It was likewise, in a manner, the cradle of the renowned friendship which subsisted between our two saints; and the following extraordinary occurrence served very much to strengthen, confirm, and perpetuate it. A strange custom existed at Athens relative to such scholars as were new comers. The students began by introducing them into a numerous assembly of youths like themselves, and there they exposed them to all imaginable raillery and insolence, after which they led them across the city in procession, conducted by all the boys, marching two by two before them. When they came to the place appointed, the whole company stopped, set up a loud shout, and acted as if they would break open the gates.

“When the new comer had there been admitted, he

* Belles-Lettres, vol. iv.

was restored to liberty. Gregory, who came first to Athens, saw how opposite this ridiculous practice would be to the grave and serious character of Basil, and having great influence with his companions, he got them to dispense with it in favor of his friend. 'This it was,' says St. Gregory, in the admirable account he gives of the matter, 'which began to kindle in us that flame which has never since been extinguished, and which pierced our hearts with a dart that is fixed there for ever. Happy Athens,' he cries out, 'thou source of all my felicity! I went hither only to acquire knowledge, and I found there the most precious of all my treasures—an affectionate and faithful friend.'

"This relation, formed and begun as I have now mentioned, grew every day stronger and stronger; especially when these two friends, who kept nothing secret from each other, reciprocally laying open their hearts, discerned they had both the same end in view, and sought for the same treasure, namely, wisdom and virtue. They lived under the same roof, ate at the same table, had the same exercises and amusements, and were, properly speaking, one and the same soul; 'a marvellous union,' says St. Gregory, 'which cannot be really produced by any other than a chaste and Christian friendship.'

"We both alike aspired to knowledge,—an object the most capable of raising sentiments of envy and jealousy, and yet we were absolutely exempt from that subtle and malicious passion, and experienced no other than a noble emulation. Each of us had a higher sense of the glory of his friend than of his own, and sought not to gain the superiority, but to yield to the other.

"Our principal study and only end was virtue. We strove to make our friendship eternal by preparing ourselves for a blessed immortality, and by withdrawing ourselves more and more from the things of this world. We took the word of God for our conductor and guide; we served as masters and overseers one to the other, by mutually exhorting each other to the practice of piety; and I might say that we were a kind of rule to each other, whereby to discern truth from falsehood, and good from evil.'

"We had no conversation with such of our companions as were rude, passionate, or immoral: we associated only with such as by their modesty, circumspection, and wisdom, might assist and support us in the good designs we had formed; fully aware that bad examples, like contagious diseases, are easily communicated.'

“These two saints, as we cannot too often repeat to youth, were always distinguished among their companions by their diligence and labor; by the extraordinary success they had in all their studies, by the ease and readiness with which they acquired all the sciences taught at Athens;—polite learning, poetry, eloquence, and philosophy. But they were still more distinguished by the ‘innocence’ of their manners, which was alarmed at the sight of the least danger, and dreaded even the shadow of vice.

“A dream which St. Gregory had when he was very young, of which he has left us an elegant description in verse, contributed very much to inspire him with these noble sentiments. As he slept he thought he saw two virgins, of the same age and of equal beauty, clothed in a modest manner, and without any of those ornaments of which ladies are usually fond. Their eyes were fixed upon the ground, and their countenance covered with a veil. ‘The sight of them,’ says the saint, ‘filled me with joy, for they seemed to have something in them more than human. When I asked them who they were, one told me she was *Purity*, and the other *Continence*; both the companions of Jesus Christ and the friends of those who renounced marriage to lead a heavenly life. They exhorted me to join my heart and mind to theirs, that being decked with the glory of virginity, they might present me before the light of the immortal Trinity. After these words, they flew up to Heaven, and my eyes followed them as far as they could.’

“All this, indeed, was but a dream, but it made a lasting impression on the heart of the saint. He never forgot the agreeable image of chastity, and recalled it with pleasure. ‘It was,’ he says himself, ‘a spark of fire, which, increasing by degrees, enkindled in me the love of perfect continence.’

“Both Basil and Gregory had great need of this virtue, to defend themselves amidst the perils with which they were surrounded at Athens, which then, of all cities, presented the greatest dangers to morality, on account of the vast concourse of foreign students, who brought with them to this city their vices and irregularities. ‘But,’ says St. Gregory, ‘we had the happiness of experiencing, in that corrupt city, something like what the poets tell of a river which preserves the sweetness of its waters amid the saltness of the sea, and of an animal which lives in the midst of fire. We shunned the conversation and society of the bad; we knew only two streets in Athens—that which led

to the church, and that which led to the schools. As to entertainments, spectacles, assemblies, and festivals, we were absolutely ignorant of them.'

"One might naturally suppose that youths of this character, who kept aloof from society, who took no part in any of the pleasures and diversions of those of their own age, and whose pure and innocent lives were a continual censure of the irregularities of their school-fellows, must have been disagreeable to them, and the object of their hatred, or, at least, of their contempt. It was quite otherwise, however; and nothing is more glorious to the memory of these two illustrious saints, nor, I would venture to say, reflects more honor upon piety itself, than such an event. Their virtue must indeed have been very pure, and their conduct very wise and discreet, thus to win for them the esteem, respect, and love of all their companions.

"This was seen in a remarkable manner when it was reported that they were about to return into their own country. The grief was universal; cries and lamentations were heard on all sides, and tears flowed from every eye. The people were about to lose the honor of their city, the glory of their schools. Masters and scholars, adding force and violence to entreaties and compliments, protested that they would not consent to their departure. One of the two friends could not help yielding to this extraordinary solicitation, which might rather be called a conspiracy to detain him. This was Gregory; and one may easily judge how much he was concerned at it.

"I question whether it is possible to imagine more perfect models for youth than those I have now laid before them. In them we find united all the circumstances that can render youth amiable and estimable;—nobility of birth, great intellectual acquirements, and incredible ardor for study, wonderful success in all the sciences, polite and elegant manners, a surprising modesty in the midst of public applause, and, what infinitely sets off all these qualifications, a piety and fear of God which evil examples only improved and confirmed. We may read an admirable character of these two great saints in M. du Guet's Letters, expressly written for the use of the scholars who were to answer upon some of their discourses.

"Besides the examples of some illustrious Christian saints, such as the two I have mentioned, it may be proper for young persons to take a view of those that are to be found in the Holy Scripture. They will there find the

youthful Samuel, by his piety and virtue alike agreeable to God and men. *And the child Samuel grew up, and was in favor with the Lord, and also with men.** They will there admire a holy king, who at eight years of age, following the example of David, was ever careful to please God in all he did. *And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father.†* They will there see Tobias,‡ after he had spent his youth in innocence, avoiding the company of such as sacrificed to the golden calves, showing nothing childish in his behavior, and keeping with all exactness the injunctions of the law from his infancy. They will, I say, see him educating his son in the same manner, by teaching him from his earliest youth to fear God, and abstain from every sin. They will be surprised to find, long before Christianity, a courage truly heroic and Christian in the seven brothers, the Machabees, who all died by the most cruel torments rather than transgress the law of God. *We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of God, received from our fathers.§*

“But they must principally imbibe their sentiments from the very fountain of holiness and piety, that is, from Jesus Christ our Lord, who, to sanctify childhood and youth, was pleased to become a child, and afterwards, to set an example to all persons of the several virtues which they should practise, by his exactness in going up to the temple at the appointed times; by his diligence in hearing the doctors; by the wisdom and modesty of his manners; by his application to do the work of his Father, and to execute his orders without consulting flesh and blood; by his perfect submission to his parents; and lastly, by the care he took in showing before God and man, in proportion as he advanced in years, a visible progress in grace and wisdom, the plenitude of which he had received from the first moment of his incarnation.”

* 1 Samuel, ii, 26. † 2 Kings, xxii, 2. ‡ Tobias, 1. § 2 Mac., vii, 2



THE SCHOLAR'S REGULATION

During Vacation.

“Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy.” (Gal., vi, 16.)

Vacation being a time in which scholars are greatly exposed to become relaxed in their religious duties, and even to fall into the abyss of sin, a child will vainly expect to remain faithful in the midst of the snares and temptations that beset him on every side unless he is provided with a rule of conduct which will continually remind him of his duties. The following may be found beneficial:—

EACH DAY.—1. Rise early. Unless you are ill, never be found in bed later than six o'clock. Sleep taken by night reposes, that of the morning enervates. Clothe yourself quickly and modestly; never appear in the presence of others until you are decently dressed.

2. Say your morning prayers without delay. Prayer, according to St. Augustine, is a golden key that unbolts the gates of Heaven. Never leave your bedroom before having acquitted yourself of this first duty of piety.

3. If in your power, assist at Mass every morning; this will draw down Heaven's choicest favors on yourself and your parents. Let no day pass by without rendering your tribute of honor to the Blessed Virgin; for this end say the “Hail Holy Queen,” the “Memorare,” your beads, etc. You should also be specially devoted to St. Joseph, your Guardian Angel, and Patron Saint. Ask of God, through their intercession, the grace to know your vocation. (See St. Patrick's Manual, on the Study of Vocation, page 374.)

4. Allot a portion of each day to serious study; if you neglect this the consequence shall be—a loss of knowledge, a disgust for study, an affection for idleness, and so forth.

5. Be exact to say grace before and after meals; observe the rules of etiquette at table which are to be found in Ch. VI. Christian Politeness.

6. Make a short lecture every day in some pious book. When we pray, says St. Ambrose, we speak to God, and when we read books of piety God speaks to us. (See Christian Politeness, Ch. XI, on the choice of books.)

7. Finish the day by the evening prayers and examination of conscience. If the laudible practice of saying the prayers in common is not the custom, retire into your chamber to acquit yourself of this duty.

EACH WEEK.—1. Sanctify the Sunday and Holidays by pious and charitable works. Make it a conscientious duty to assist at the Parochial, or High Mass. Listen to the sermon with the greatest attention. How agreeable to see a boy on returning from Church, being able to repeat almost all that the Priest has said in his sermon.

2. Never absent yourself from Catechism or Vespers. When a legitimate cause prevents your attending, supply the omission by prayers and pious reading.

EACH MONTH.—1. Approach the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist as often as during the scholastic year. Prepare yourself most diligently for their reception. (See St. PATRICK'S MANUAL, pages 73 and 119.)

2. On the day you have the happiness to communicate, avoid all distracting company and amusements. Frequently raise your heart to God in short acts of thanksgiving; and, if possible, pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament towards evening. (St. P's. M. -258.)

DUTIES IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE.—1. Entertain a sovereign respect for your beloved parents; consider their company as the centre and principal source of your happiness during vacation. Anticipate their every want and make it your agreeable duty to execute their behests with the utmost alacrity. Beware of imitating those wicked children who, instead of being the joy and bliss of their parents, are a source of sorrow and affliction to them.

2. Receive their counsels, admonitions and so forth, as coming from God, whose representatives they are.

3. Never dare to pass the slightest censure on their conduct; if you believe it blamable, leave all to the judgment of God and pray with more ardor for their eternal salvation.

4. Let the greatest harmony reign between you and your sisters and brothers. If older than they, you should be an angel of peace in their midst,—consoling them in their little troubles, instructing them in their duties, and edifying them at all times and on all occasions.

GENERAL DISPOSITIONS.—1. Remember that there is no vacation in the service of God, and that we owe Him at all times, respect, gratitude, and love; for He loves us, blesses us, and continually takes care of us.

2. Remember, also, that the devil takes no vacation; that he prowls incessantly about us like a roaring lion; and that he can be overcome but by prayer, humility, diffidence in self, and confidence in God.

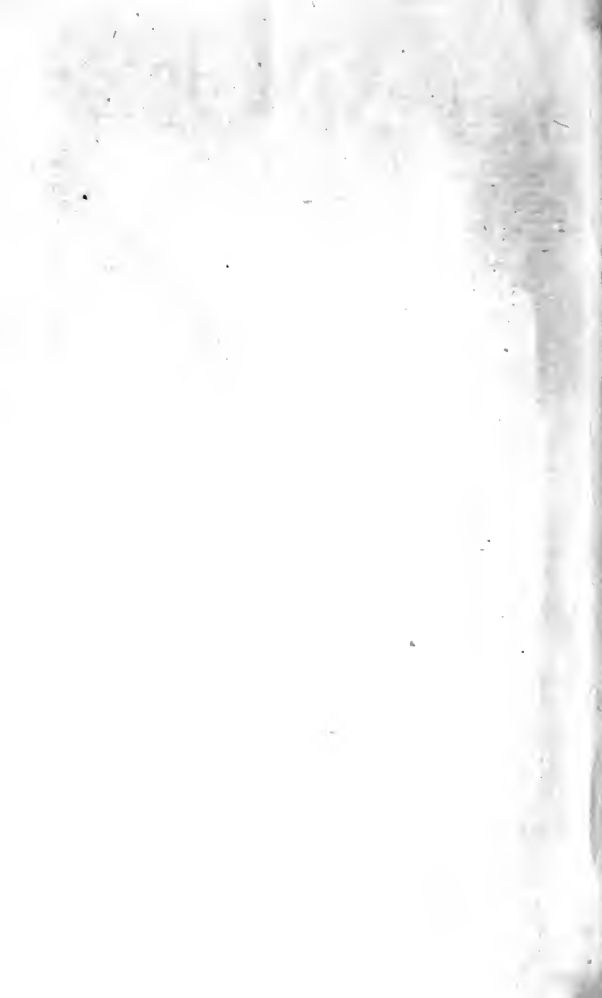
3. Avoid idleness. "In doing nothing," says Seneca, "we learn to do evil." The time of youth is too precious to be spent in indolence. Labor is a noble flower from which we may expect the richest fruit.

4. Associate with those persons only who are of orderly habits; shun such as are too loose in conversation, such as use unbecoming words, or that profess maxims little in conformity to the spirit of the Gospel. See Ch. XIII. Christian Politeness on the Choice of Companions.

5. If you have the misfortune to commit any grievous fault, delay not to confess it. When poison has remained for some time in a vase, it infects it to such a degree that it becomes almost impossible to purify it. Exactly the same happens to the soul that has become the abode of mortal sin. Confess, then, immediately, and defer not your return to God until the reopening of the school, and still less till the time of the retreat. Make known to your confessor all your pains and temptations that he may prescribe the proper remedies.

6. If you would avoid sin, flee the occasions thereof. A dangerous companion is the right eye, the right hand, that you must pluck out, or cut off, and cast far from you. Keep strict watch over your senses; they are the doors through which the demon enters and destroys the soul.

What a thrice happy vacation shall the child spend who is faithful to these advices! What consolation for his beloved parents, and edification for his companions!..... How abundantly he shall be rewarded for the little sacrifices he will have made! When vacation is over, with what earnestness he shall return to his studies,—his conscience unsullied, his heart at liberty, his soul in peace. Of such a child we may truly say: "He shall be like a tree planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season." (Ps. I, 3.)





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