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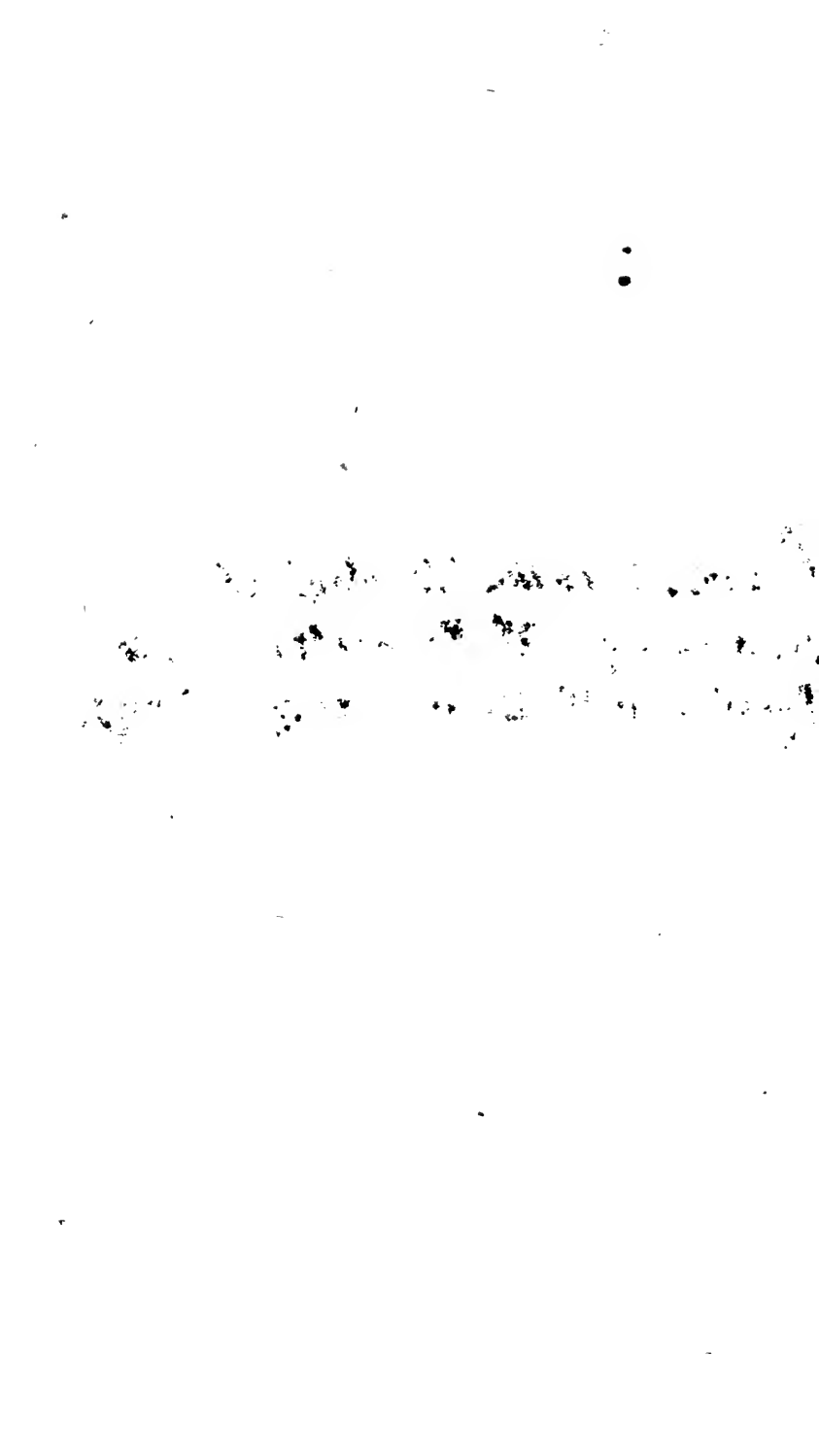
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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

IN TWO VOLUMES.

THE FIRST,

UPON THE PERFECTIONS AND

Wonderful Works of God :

THE SECOND,

UPON THE DIVINITY AND

Wonderful Works of Jesus Christ.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH REEVE.

VOL. I.

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1796.



P R E F A C E.

THE imperfect knowledge men have of the God, who made them, is one great reason, why they take so little pains to serve him. Being destined by the very end of their creation to serve him in this life and to be happy with him in the next, it should be natural for them, one would think, to inquire into the nature of that happiness, and to learn by what means they may make that happiness their own. To a Christian therefore no knowledge can be so useful or so interesting as that of God. For to know God is the first step he has to take towards the happiness he hopes for. From that knowledge he must draw every efficacious motive of serving God with fidelity and truth to the end of life.

Yet so strange is the perverseness of human nature, that most Christians in the world seem as unconcerned about any future state of happiness, as though they had little interest in it. They appear to know as little of God, as though they did not believe in him, and live as inattentive to
his

his service, as though his punishments or his rewards, his hatred or his love, were to them a matter of no consequence. Notwithstanding their boast of an enlightened age, they betray a shameful ignorance of the only knowledge, which dignifies a Christian, and makes him truly wise in the eyes of his Creator.

With the young and dissipated part of mankind dress and amusement is the great business of life: they read nothing, they know nothing, they will be informed of nothing, that opens their minds to the eternal truths. By your sprightly geniuses a book upon any serious subject is affectedly thrown aside, not to interrupt the fashionable trifles of the day. To the lovers in sine of loose romantic tales, the very title of a Practical Discourse is sufficient to give disgust. Thus through a fatal indifference for salvation, and a modish neglect of the divine service, religious duties are fallen into almost general disuse. The industrious search after worldly dissipation in some, the prevailing passion for romance in others, a stupid indolence in many, and a busy idleness in most, allow no time for profitable instruction, or for serious consideration.

What purpose therefore is a publication of Practical Discourses upon the divine attributes
likely

likely to answer, and who will read it? They, who stand most in need of instruction upon a subject of this sort, most probably will not concern themselves much about it; but others may. It is humbly offered to them both. To the first, that they may have at hand the supply of useful knowledge, whenever they shall be disposed to profit by it: to the second, that they may have the opportunity of improving themselves in a science, wherein they may have already made some progress. For if dignity of argument, if nobleness of thought, if sublimity of sentiment, have powers to affect an attentive reader, he will here find his expectation raised, his heart dilated, his understanding opened, and his will inflamed.

When we seriously consider the wonderful creation of the world out of nothing, we magnify the power that created it; when we view the regular order and harmony of nature in all its works, we adore the providence that governs and directs it; when we see repenting sinners received into favour again, we bless the mercy that forgives; and when we behold the impenitent condemned, we revere the justice that chastises. These are the great and striking operations, which a God of infinite perfection has wrought among his creatures. They are nume-

rous and distinct, as we see: yet they indicate no multiplicity of parts, and no distinction even of perfections in the principle, which produces them. For God is one unbounded, one indivisible, and one absolute perfection; the one supreme, immutable, immense, and eternal principle of all, that is or that possibly can be. By searching into the nature of this all-perfect Being, and by considering him relatively to the wonderful works he has displayed, we begin to know, as far at least as human understanding can know, what God is; how powerful, how wise, how good, how provident, how merciful, how just.

But to complete the knowledge, which every Christian ought to have of God, it is necessary not only to contemplate his absolute perfections, that subsist in the unity of his divine essence, but also to consider the relative perfections, that exist between the Three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This knowledge therefore, which in the Christian dispensation has been so explicitly revealed, and is so necessary for salvation, comprises the Trinity as well as the Unity of God. This naturally leads us to the mystery of the Incarnation. To believe in God as is requisite for salvation, we must not only know what God is in himself, but also what
he

he is become for the love of us. From eternity he is God; and in the second Person of the most blessed Trinity he is since become man for our redemption. To elucidate this great truth of Christianity, the author of the Practical Discourses upon the divine attributes, here offers to the public a second volume, upon the Divinity and wonderful Works of Jesus Christ. The works God has wrought for man in the order of grace affect not our outward senses, like those he has wrought in the order of nature. But upon examination they will appear to the true and faithful believer infinitely more wonderful, because infinitely more elevated, above the reach of his natural comprehension.

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PRACTICAL

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

UPON THE PERFECTIONS AND
Wonderful Works of God.

DISCOURSE I.

UPON THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWING THE PERFECTIONS
OF GOD.

*This is life everlasting, that they know Thee the
only true God. John c. xvii. v. 3.*

THE end of our creation being no other, than
to serve God in this life, and to enjoy him
in the next, it is no less our interest to know the
excellency of that sublime end, for which we are
made, than it is our duty to employ the means,
that advance us towards it. To an immortal soul
nothing is so natural as the desire, and nothing so
pleasing as the promise, added to the power, of be-
ing eternally happy. Being raised by the bounte-
ous hand of his Creator to a rank, little inferior to

that of angels, man meets with nothing in the order of nature here below, so dignified as himself; nothing, but what is meant by a wise providence to help him on in the attainment of his last end, the full possession of his God in everlasting glory.

To a Christian therefore, who knows his soul to be immortal, who is conscious, that he bears within him the living image and resemblance of God himself, no consideration and no study can be so interesting as that, which leads him to the knowledge of the perfections of God. Those perfections are infinitely great in themselves, and every way amiable in relation to us: at present indeed we can only see them thro' a glass according to the expression of St. Paul,* in an obscure manner, as the object of our faith; but in the day of our exaltation we shall behold them openly revealed, as the crown of our hope and completion of our final happiness. To know, to respect, to fear, and to love God is the only great business we have to do in life: to that every other business ought to be subordinate. Without the knowledge and the love of God, no other knowledge, however extensive or sublime, can contribute to our lasting and substantial good.

Let the proud philosopher examine the whole creation through in his search after knowledge, let him be skilled in every art and science, let him study nature in all its works, let him dive into the deep recesses of the sea, and sift the bowels of the earth; let

let him trace the shining orbs and planets in their vast revolutions through the heavens, and number the stars of the firmament. But should he rest there and lift up his mind to nothing higher, something will be still wanting to dignify his knowledge, and to make it profitable unto eternal life. For tho' I should be master of every science, says St. Paul;* tho' I should be able to disclose the most hidden secrets, and with the certainty of a prophet foretell future events, yet without charity I am nothing in the sight of God. The humble peasant, whose only study is to know, to serve, and honour God by a right intention in all he does, is in the order of grace not only a better, but also a wiser man. The invisible perfections of our great Creator are made manifest to us by the visible beauties of the creation, says the same Apostle to the Romans,† and from viewing the things that are made, we rise to the knowledge of Him who made them, even so as to adore his eternal power and divinity.

But amidst these evident marks of a God infinitely wise and powerful, what in general are the occupations of men, and what is their study? To what do their thoughts and projects tend? Let us look through the world, and we shall find the greatest part of mankind busily engaged in almost every other employ, but that of serving God. Strongly attached to the goods of the earth, they toil after vanity, and seldom extend their wishes beyond the animal gratification of their senses. Their study,

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their

their solicitude and schemes are solely fixed on temporal advantages, as if they had no heavenly inheritance to acquire, or as if their hopes of a future life were to perish with them in the grave. Many there are, who fancying, as it seems, that they have nothing to do but to stalk about the earth and to follow their own conceits, trifle away their days in one continued round of dissipation and unprofitable amusements, while others hurry down the torrent of restless desires, and waste themselves in the pursuit of such things only, as serve to irritate their growing passions.

Thus the greater part of Christians live, regardless of the obligations they owe to God, ignorant of his perfections, and careless of the motives, that should excite them to serve him well. Tho' consecrated to him in the sacrament of Baptism, and made thereby the living temples of the Holy Ghost, they know so little of his divine perfections, that the inscription, which St. Paul found written upon an altar at Athens, *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*,* might with as good reason be also written upon their foreheads. For, since their thoughts are principally taken up with earthly delight, and the bent of their inclinations is chiefly turned to such objects as are pleasing to flesh and blood, they fatally neglect the most profitable, the most interesting, and most necessary knowledge for a Christian, which is the knowledge of God.

For

* Acts xvii.

For this is the knowledge, which opens our minds to the truths of eternal life, and points out our way to final happiness. Hence the first advantage we derive from it, is to know the object and motive of those essential virtues, which God requires from us; the object and motive of our faith, without which it is impossible to please God; § the motive and object of our hope, without which there is no salvation; † the motive in fine and object of our love, without which we remain in death. || Hence we see, that a God of infinite wisdom and veracity is to be implicitly believed in all he teaches, because he can neither deceive, nor be deceived; that from a God of infinite power and benevolence we may confidently hope to receive the reward of our services to him, because he is always faithful in his promises; and that a God of infinite perfection is to be beloved above all things, because he is our sovereign good, and infinitely amiable in himself.

Hence in the second place we learn to respect God, which is another great advantage that results from the consideration of his divine perfections. For when we reflect, that God by his immensity reaches from the highest heavens to the lowermost abyss, that by his omnipresence he comprises the whole universe, and fills every part thereof, that we are always near him, always before him, always in his sight and under the watch of his
adorable

adorable eye, it is impossible not to respect our sovereign Lord, who is always at hand to hear and see very thing that passeth both within and about us, who beholds each motion, and knows every secret of our heart more perfectly, than we do ourselves. Under this persuasion we shall be ever upon our guard against every word and action unbecoming the divine sight; and when tempted to sin, we shall be careful not to do in the presence of God, what we should be ashamed of doing in the presence of men. How can I do evil, how shall I dare to sin in the presence of my God,* said the virtuous Joseph, when pressed for his consent to an action, which the Law forbids? When we reflect, that God is the witness of our conduct in every place and in every circumstance of life, how powerfully are we moved to perform every action well? How studious are we to deserve his good will, how eager to do what is pleasing in his sight? Walk before me,† said Almighty God to Abraham, and be perfect. The obedient Patriarch diligently complied with the wholesome precept, and became thereby the pattern of all faithful believers. By the like holy practice we shall also learn to respect the presence of our great God, we shall be animated with fresh zeal in his service, and we shall be warned by a lively fear not to offend him, which is the third advantage arising from the consideration of his adorable perfections.

A God infinitely holy detests not only sin, but even the appearance of sin; a God infinitely just has

* Gen. xxxix. † Gen. xvii.

has his thunderbolts at hand to crush the hardy sinner, who shall dare to insult his sovereign majesty; a God infinitely powerful can in a moment hurl us down into the bottomless pit of a fiery eternity. At this consideration we are naturally roused into a sense of our duty. A holy fear takes possession of the heart, and awes us into a faithful observance of the divine precepts. Wherefore fear God, says Ecclesiastes,* and you undoubtedly will keep his commandments. For the fear of the Lord is accompanied with all those spiritual advantages, which open the way to true wisdom. It awakens our attention to the eternal truths, it puts us upon the watch against the enemies of our salvation, it hardens us against the allurements of sin, it blunts the sting of temptation, and, when duty calls, it teaches us to sacrifice every temporal interest, rather than incur the divine anger by any grievous transgression of his holy law.

But the perfect Christian is influenced less by fear than by love, in his motive of serving God; and his love becomes more or less animated according to the knowledge he has of the divine perfections. In the world God is imperfectly served, because he is imperfectly known; he is loved but by few, because few reflect upon the motives they have of loving him. When the knowledge of his amiable perfections is but faintly traced upon the mind, the affection of the will is too weak to make any im-
pression

pression upon the heart. Had we but a clear perception of a God infinitely amiable, we could not help loving him; or were we only serious in our application to know him, we should feel ourselves happily impelled not only to love, but to give proofs of our love in his service. For it is impossible to remain indifferent, when we attentively consider, how God has first loved us, and how liberal he has been of his favours to us. He opens his hand, and showers down the gifts of his benevolence upon every living creature. When we reflect, that this God is as infinitely perfect in himself, as he is infinitely good to man, and that in him is centered the plenitude of all joy and happiness, which an immortal soul can aspire to, we must be void of sentiment not to love him with our whole heart.

The wise man tells us, that to know God is perfect justice, and to know his justice and his power is the the root of immortality.* Hence the learned Saint Austin in a style peculiar to himself, but with a zeal common to all good Christians, never ceased to pray for the gift of that sublime knowledge. During the hours of his retirement, at his study, or as he walked along, he would often lift up his heart to God, and by some ejaculatory act, which spoke the fervent piety of his soul, would earnestly beg the Holy Ghost to enlighten his understanding, being well convinced, that by knowing God he should be effectually moved to love him.

* Wisdom C. xv.

him. O grant me the grace to know thee, he would frequently cry out in the transport of sweet devotion, grant me, dearest Lord, the grace to love thee! Let me know thee, O my God, and I shall love thee! For the knowledge of thy amiable perfections must necessarily call forth all the powers of my soul to adore, to love, and to serve thee.

This knowledge of God, and this consideration of the perfections of God is moreover the source of many other advantages equally conducive to our eternal good. For the more we know of the perfections of God, the less liable we are to be seduced by the imperfections of creatures. One single ray of divine light is enough to dispel the cloud, which the love of worldly delights often throws upon the mind, and to shew us at once the vanity and emptiness of all human greatness. Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, § all is vanity and affliction of the soul, except to love God and to serve him alone. If by considering the adorable majesty of God we learn to respect him, we shall be no longer withheld from his service by any human respects; but free from the humiliating and disgraceful fetters of worldly servitude we shall enjoy that noble, that desirable liberty, which is peculiar to the dutiful children of God. If by considering the tremendous justice of God we are excited to fear him, we then shall fear nothing else. No threats of men, no storms of persecution, nor poverty, nor sickness,
nor

nor adversity, nor the sword, nor even death itself can intimidate the faithful Christian, or deter him from the duty, which he owes to God. If by considering the ineffable goodness of God we are effectually moved to love and serve him, we then are happy even in this life, as from thence we may confidently hope of being eternally happy in the next. For the love we bear to God during our pilgrimage on earth, is a comfortable pledge of that incomprehensible felicity, which is reserved for us in Heaven.

Having thus discovered the salutary spring, from which such blessings flow, let us refresh and strengthen our languishing souls with the streams thereof. For as the hart pants after the fountains of waters, says the Psalmist,* so doth my soul, O God, pant after thee. Lifted on the wings of heavenly knowledge, which a calm consideration of the divine perfections will furnish us with, we shall soar in thought above all that is created; we shall have nothing in view, but what is immortal. Our attention will be fixed on the sublime objects of faith, our hearts will glow with the fire of perfect charity, and our ardent wish will be to see those glorious perfections of the divinity revealed, which constitute the happiness of saints and angels. To contemplate God, to praise and glorify God is the happy occupation of the Blessed in heaven, and whilst we employ our mental powers in the same holy exerciſe

* Psalm xli.

exercise, as far as weak mortality will permit, we begin to do in time, what we hope will be our happiness to do through all eternity. For by the obscure but certain guidance of divine faith our souls are prepared and fitted out to possess him in the brightness of his glory.

But however charming this knowledge of the divine perfections may appear, few Christians are perhaps serious in their endeavours to attain it. Some fancy it too intricate for them to learn it, some too sublime for them to aspire to it, while others think it either incompatible with their occupations in life, or not adapted to the capacity of common mortals. It is a science, they cry, proper only for Saints; and that without a special grace it would be presumption in them to approach the inaccessible light of omnipotence, and to face the throne of glory.

A devout consideration of the divine perfections is within the reach of the meanest capacity. Every Christian, however destitute of human learning, has the capacity of knowing God, of confessing his providence, of admiring his justice, of loving his goodness, and of adoring his wisdom. In the humble performance of our prayers and other spiritual duties we need no shining talents, no sublime variety of thought, nor any eminent gift of contemplation. To enable us to love and serve God, it is not necessary that we should possess either power,
or

or riches, or learning. Such qualifications may entitle us indeed to some notice in the world, but without humility, without piety and charity, they are of little value in the sight of God.

To those, who are little in their own eyes, our heavenly father communicates his favours more abundantly, and while he resists the proud, on the humble only he bestows the grace of true wisdom. I give thee thanks, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, says our blessed Saviour,* because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Therefore to such he makes the most pressing invitation to come and learn at the very source of knowledge itself: approach, says he, and be enlightened.† My Brethren, we approach to almighty God by fervent prayer, by holy aspirations, by devout meditation, by a habit in fine of recollecting our thoughts and of uniting our hearts with him, in whose sight we always stand. Thus it was, that the Saints became eminent in all Christian virtues, and thus by treading in the same steps, we shall with them arrive at the same happy term.

God is infinite in power, nor is he less infinite in goodness. His hand is always ready to support us in every difficulty, and his eye is always open for the comfort of those who fear him. By day and by night his providence watches over us; we are
always

* Mat. xi. † Psalm xxxiii.

always in his presence, whether sleeping or awake, whether in company or alone. Let us often consider his adorable perfections; let us never cease offering to him our thoughts, our affections, and the warmest sentiments, of our hearts. God is glorified by such a service; he is pleased with the humble homage of his devout servants, he is attentive to their wants, and repays their prayers with the effusion of his choicest graces. With sincere humility, but with a lively confidence of success, let us then frequently present ourselves in spirit before the throne of God. In holy contemplation let us there adore his unspeakable perfections, and draw from thence the succours, that are necessary to support and animate our steps towards heaven. Let us dwell in thought on each of the divine perfections, let us humble our hearts before him and leisurely excite in our souls such affections and such sentiments of gratitude and holy love, as may recommend us to the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation.

DISCOURSE II.

UPON THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

I am, who am. Exodus c. iii. v. 14.

THE idea of an eternal independent Being is the most exalted notion we can form of an all-perfect God. It is the notion, which God himself has given us of his own unlimited greatness. I am, who am, said he to Moses, and He, who is, commandeth thee to go, and to lead his people forth from the land of Egypt. God being eternal is anterior to every other being that exists, and cannot possibly derive the principle of existence from any other than himself. Without beginning and without end he exists necessarily of himself, and as no period of time can ever measure the duration of his existence, so no possible length of ages can ever work the least diminution or increase in the nature of his unlimited perfections.

Immortal indeed are the angels, and so are the souls of men; but neither the one nor the other are eternal. Nor is it owing to any independent perfections of their own, but to the pure liberty of their creator, that they are even privileged with the grace of immortality. Their nature, it is true, consists of no variety of component parts, and consequently

frequently contains no internal cause of dissolution ; but being destitute of the principle of self-existence, they continually stand in need of the divine power to preserve them in the life which it first gave. If the Angels are therefore said at any time to be eternal, it is not to be understood in the strict meaning of the word eternal, but in a limited sense only, in as much as they are ordained to have no end, and by the absolute will of the Almighty, who first created them, they will continue to exist eternally. For the idea of eternal in its full extent is by no means applicable to any thing which has had a beginning, and therefore may have an end. Consequently none but God, none but the only one supreme and independent Being, can be truly and properly stiled Eternal, whose greatness knows no bounds, whose perfections are infinite, whose existence has no beginning and will have no end.

The eternity of God has no distinction of parts, it contains no succession of days and years. In each moment, in each instant of time it is undivided and entire. At present it is, what it always was ; it is, what it will always be. Millions of years may roll away, they will not shorten its duration, and millions of ages may still succeed, they will add nothing to its length. Eternity is therefore one eternal moment ; a moment without beginning, and without end, without diminution and succession. I call it a moment, because in each instant it is whole ; and I call it an eternal moment, because it lasts for ever, and will be for ever whole. But when we
thus

ever, and will be for ever whole. but when we thus express ourselves, we don't pretend to convey any clear or distinct idea of eternity: the eternity as well as the immensity of God is infinitely more than we can express or even comprehend. The terms, in which we are forced to speak both of the one and of the other, seem little adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding. The immensity of God is indivisible and unlimited, so is his eternity. By them he wonderfully reaches from end to end, always existing and always present, wholly and not by parts, in every place and in every moment, without the possibility of being ever separated by space or confined by time.

To speak with propriety of the immutable eternity of God, we must open the holy Scriptures, and adopt the language which God himself has there taught us. Before the world was formed, says the royal Prophet, * before the foundations of the earth were laid, or the date of time was known, O God, thou art, and so shalt thou always be thro' boundless ages for evermore. The heavens and the earth shall pass away; the stars shall fall from the firmament, and the sun be lost in everlasting night; but thou, O Lord, always art the same, and thy years shall never fail. The Prophet Habacuc † is still more sublime in his nobleness of thought, and strength of expression upon this subject. The Almighty stood, says he, and took the dimensions of
the

* Psalm lxxxix.

† Habacuc, C. iii.

the earth: he looked and dissolved the nations thereof: the aged mountains mouldered away beneath his feet, and the hills of the world bent with the journeys of his eternity. The Prophet by this energy of language seems to behold the eternity of God pressing upon the hills and mountains of the earth, and crushing them by the weight of rolling ages into their first nothing.

In the eternity of God, says S. Augustin, there is nothing past, nothing yet to come: there is no yesterday or to-morrow, there is but the present moment, and that moment is eternal. Tho' we fancy to ourselves whole millions of years, which may be supposed to have elapsed before the creation of the world, God was then as great, as powerful, and as happy as he now is, and as he will always be. Let us moreover bring to our imagination a still more extensive, and still increasing number of years and ages, successively crowding one upon another; both before and after them we shall find God always reigning in the full bloom of his eternity, always happy in the inexhaustible enjoyment of his own perfections. For he is both prior and posterior to every possible period of time; and tho' that period should be stretched far beyond any length of ages, that the mind of man can reach to, yet in the eye of an eternal Deity it is but as a day, which is already passed.

In the order of nature time is always passing and always changing, like to a broad and rapid torrent,

which bears down all that comes within its course : but the eternity of God is always fixed and always the same, equally incapable both of change and motion. Immovable as a rock, it is neither altered by the current, nor wasted by the succession of flowing years, being always whole and lasting in itself without the least diminution or increase in the nature of its existence. For to the perfection of an infinite Being nothing can be added, and from the eternity of an unchangeable Being nothing can be taken away. He was, he is, he will be, nor can he ever cease to be, what he now is, infinite and eternal.

All creatures are by nature subject to change and decay. The sun may indeed continue on its course for ages yet to come; the rivers may still flow with fresh supplies from their sources to the sea; the noble monuments of art, once erected to the memory of departed heroes, may seem to defy the hand of time; the fame of mighty kings and conquerors may spread thro' the nations of the earth, their actions may excite the envy or the admiration of mankind, and their names may be recorded and descend from age to age, from generation to generation to the latest posterity: yet all will pass away; all will fail at last, and every remnant of human greatness will be blotted out. Within the bosom of the earth every mortal man shall sleep in dust, till a new change of things shall for the last time come on, and then the earth itself shall be no more.

But

But, sitting on his throne of inaccessible glory, and surrounded by millions of immortal spirits, all and each of them glowing with a brightness more resplendent than the sun, God shall for ever shine without change or decay in one uninterrupted permanence of eternity.

When God first gave us an existence, it was that we might share with him in a happy eternity. For tho' the bodies, in which we live, are dissolved by death at their appointed time, yet our souls are immortal. At the last day we shall rise again, and from that moment we shall exist body and soul together for eternity. Eternity, relatively considered, is as comfortable in one point of view, as it is dreadful in another. To the patient sufferer of affliction the hope of endless happiness gives unspeakable comfort, but to an obstinate sinner the fear of endless punishment is most dreadful.

Whatever station Providence has assigned us in the world, we are but as guests and strangers in a foreign land, left to work our way towards our heavenly home. Whether we here meet with comforts or afflictions, whether we walk thro' the pleasant fields of prosperity, or tread the thorny paths of adversity, we must be careful not to be misled by the one, nor disheartened by the other. It is not by them, that we are to be made either happy or unhappy; they are no more than the transient incidents of human life; we shall exist, when they are

no more. The world may seek to flatter us with its smiles, to amuse us with its vanities, or to draw us out of our way by its dangerous allurements: let us then reflect, that we are made for Heaven, and earthly delights will no longer engage the affection of our hearts. The world will cease to charm the moment we are convinced that it cannot make us happy. On a soul therefore, that keeps eternity in view, the fleeting vanities of life make no deep impression. She finds them too trifling to satisfy her expectations, too earthly to allay her thirst of happiness, too short and too imperfect to remove even her present wants.

Now if from the things that please, we turn our thoughts to the things that hurt us, we shall find, that the very reason, which damps the pleasures of the first, will soften the sting of the latter. For tho' we groan under a load of misfortunes, tho' we may be visited by sickness, and fed with the bread of affliction, yet in the midst of all our sufferings it will be a singular comfort to reflect, that they soon must end, and that we have an eternity to expect. We know by faith, that the light and momentary tribulation of the Just will be succeeded by immense joys, which shall never end. Wherefore let us be moderate in our affections: let faith and reason guide us in our schemes and pursuits: for there is nothing permanent under the sun: the world passes away with every object, that can delight or afflict us long. After a short interval of time we shall also

also pass away: an eternity will then succeed. An eternity of joy, or an eternity of pain, will be our certain lot: the first is the object of our present hope, the latter of our fears. The five following reflections will point out the fruit we are to reap from this consideration.

1st. When compared with the vast and unbounded view we have taken of the eternity of God, how confined, how short, and almost nothing is the life of man? A few days, or a few years at most, make up the whole of its duration: the day of our departure borders upon that of our birth: we exist to day, to morrow perchance we shall be no more. One sudden stroke, as it happens daily to many, may cut us off in the middle of our career, and rank us among the dead. Even the longest extent of human life, when it is once past, will appear as short as a single instant: and in effect, life is no more than a morning vapour, a fleeting shadow, or a passing cloud, which disperses in air almost as soon as it is formed: or to speak more properly, life is a continual death, which begins to destroy us the moment we begin to live. Yet short and perishable as this life is, how idly is it often spent? How often impaired or thrown away in sinful excesses, in toilsome pursuits and empty projects, as if a transient enjoyment of this world were the only end of our creation, or as if after death we had nothing more to fear or hope for? What are your sentiments, my brethren, upon this important point, and what do you conclude?

2dly. As God is eternal in himself, so by an eternal decree he has ordained an eternity for man. But in this eternity, towards which man daily tends, there are two opposite states for his punishment or reward according to his works. There is an eternity of bliss prepared for the Elect: there is an eternity of pain reserved for the reprobate. The first abounds with every delight, that can make us happy; the latter is composed of every evil, than can make us miserable. Which do we pursue? To which of the two shall we belong? Shall we be exalted with the Elect in glory, or shall we be cast with the reprobate into endless misery? This is a secret wholly hidden. From the infinite mercy and goodness of God each one should hope for the best; but conscious of his weakness no man should think himself secure.

3dly. Eternity is at no great distance from us; we stand upon its brink, and nothing but the slender partition of life divides us from it. Man, born of a woman, is destined to live but a short time.* The number of his days is already counted, the precise hour of his passing out of time into eternity is irrevocably fixt. How soon, or when that hour will come, we know not; it may surprize us in an instant; it will come at the instant we least suspect; but come when it will, we most certainly know, that in that instant we shall be either called to endless joys, or doomed to endless pains, according to
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* Job. xiv.

our deserts. From that instant will be dated our unchangeable lot for ever.

4thly. Under this uncertainty when our hour will come, and knowing that when it comes, eternal life or eternal death will immediately ensue, we cannot be too early nor too serious in preparing for the awful event. They, who are truly wise, make this their constant study; by them no day is lost. They consider time as a thing too precious, and life too short, to be thrown away upon what they must soon part with. They wisely think no precaution can be too great, while eternal happiness is pending. Eternal happiness once lost is never to be regained. Have we ever seriously considered this? Have we prudently provided against the worst? Should a voice from Heaven this moment summon us away, what would be our thoughts? With what dispositions should we obey the call? Is our conscience free from guilt? Are we prepared to answer for ourselves at the tribunal of an eternal God, or have we done enough to secure judgment in our favour?

5thly. Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord,* for from thenceforth their labours will cease, and they shall rest in everlasting peace. Under this consideration eternity wears a cheering aspect. During our mortal pilgrimage on earth, we are in a state of exile; we must necessarily meet with many troubles

* Rev. xiv.

troubles and afflictions in our way. But in our patience we shall possess our souls. † We suffer nothing, but what we may make conducive to our future glory. Our heavenly Father always has his eye upon us; he sees what we undergo for his sake, and will reward us in due season. Wait but a little while and he will call us to himself. Heaven is the place assigned for our permanent abode. The clouds of passing evils, which at times overshadow the sunshine of life, will be finally dispelled by the bright day of eternity. Though perishable and mortal by nature, we are by grace entitled to the privilege of sharing in that happy, that glorious immortality, which is the inheritance of Saints. To that let us constantly aspire; in view of that let us regulate our thoughts, our actions, and desires; in hopes of that let us solely live and prepare to die. For whether we live, or whether we die, we solely belong to God. A few years of life on earth are only granted, that we may qualify ourselves to live eternally in Heaven.

My brethren, these reflections are solid, they are interesting, and they are salutary. To impress the sentiments they have awakened still more deeply in our hearts, let us consider the state of two souls in the act of quitting this world to enter upon eternity, the one a just soul, rising triumphant into heavenly glory; the other a reprobate, falling headlong down into the burning lake. In the first place,
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† Luke xxi.

then, let us conceive, if we can, the joyful transports of a soul escaping from this vale of tears, and invited by her heavenly Father to take possession of the kingdom, which his love has prepared for her from the beginning of the world. When soaring in her flight, she shall cast back an eye upon the earth, how will she congratulate with herself upon the dangers she has passed, upon the victories she has gained, and the trophies she has raised over sin and all her enemies? Death shall then be absorbed in her triumph; neither sickness, nor pain, nor sorrow shall afflict her more. But with what feeling will she look down on those, whom she has left behind, in the midst of dangers, of troubles, and vexations, which are inseparable from human life? With pity she will see their trifling pastimes, their empty projects, their worldly cares, and the turbulent desires, which cloud their understandings, and harden their hearts against the force of truth.

O perverse, O senseless world, will she exclaim, how great is thy insensibility, and how deplorable is the blindness of thy deluded followers, who please themselves with the emptiness of thy deceitful charms, and so pass their days unmindful of that immortal crown, which is prepared to reward their virtues! Eternal thanks be to thee, my God, for thus calling me from the place of exile into thy blissful presence! The expected, the long-wished for day is come, the happy moment is at hand which opens to me the mansions of the Blest, and
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unites me for ever with my God in his kingdom of glory. With sentiments like these the happy soul will enter into the joy of her Lord, there to live and reign with him thro' all eternity.

How different, alas! will be the disposition of a reprobate soul in the fatal moment, when death shall tear her from the body and all her former connexions. To her view eternity is instantly displayed, where she has nothing but endless misery to expect. With what terror will she behold the frightful prospect? The world and all its illusions will at once vanish, and the abandoned soul will see, what she would not see before, how deceitful the world is in its promises, how treacherous in its smiles, how false in its friendships. To her sorrow she will then discover the shortness of human life, and too late confess, how foolishly she squandered it away in unprofitable or sinful pursuits. With unavailing tears she will weep over her past follies, and condemn her obstinate, her stupid neglect of salvation. But what bitter anguish and despair will she feel at the sight of the bottomless abyss, of the burning lake of fire and brimstone, into which she is ready to be thrown, and from which there is no redemption? O, how earnestly will she wish for one of the many days she has idly lost, and how profitably would she employ the hour granted for repentance? But to that wretched soul the hour of repentance is elapsed, never to be had again. Her final lot is now decided, the last sentence is
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pronounced, her condemnation is without reprieve. Behold her plunged into the bottomless pit of everlasting fire, banished for ever from the light of heaven into utter darkness, loaded with the curse of her Creator and her own. O eternity, eternity! Is it possible, my brethren, that any perishable object should ever so far engross our thoughts, as to make us forget our last end, or that any earthly consideration should draw us from our Christian duty, whilst we reflect, that we have an eternity of woe to shun, and an eternity of happiness to gain?

O great and eternal God, I adore thee with all the powers of my soul; thou art the beginning, the measure, and the end of all, that is. From thee every living creature has received its life and being: by thee all things have been made, and without thee there is nothing that is, or can be made. From thy throne of eternal glory thou lookest down upon the transitory existence of all human things; thou beholdest from their beginning to their end the vast extent of ages, the quick succession of revolving years, that flow like the swift current of a river successively away, and lose themselves in the boundless ocean of thy eternity.

O God, how spacious are thy courts! How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! How exalted is the glory, and how incomprehensible are the joys of thy Elect! By the grace of adoption thou hast given us a title to them: by thy holy word,
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by the secret touches of our hearts, thou inviteſt us to thy heavenly kingdom. Shall we then be deaf to thy invitation, ſhall we forfeit our inheritance, ſhall we reſign our title to everlaſting happineſs for an earthly toy, for a baſe paſſion, for a ſhort delight? The mouth of the deep abyſs is always open; thouſands of unhappy ſouls daily fall a prey to devouring flames; there drenched with the wrath of God they ſhall eternally burn, they ſhall eternally weep, and gnaw their teeth in deſpair. My God, how terrible art thou in thy chaſtiſements! It matters but little, what our afflictions are in this ſhort life, provided we eſcape the eternal rigours of the next. The preſent ſtate, whether of comfort or affliction, will quickly paſs away; eternity is the point we are to keep in view. The courſe of our mortal life is haſtening to an end. To us ſome day, not far diſtant, will be the laſt. To numbers of ſouls the preſent is the laſt; and in this very hour their ſentence is pronounced, which aſſigns them to life or death everlaſting. When that laſt hour ſhall appear, attended with the ſymptoms of an approaching diſſolution, what will be our thoughts of what is paſt, of what once afflicted or delighted us in life? All will then vaniſh like a ſhadow, and leave us nothing but the grave.

O gracious Lord, diſpel our preſent darkneſs by the light of thy holy grace, and ſtamp upon our ſouls a lively ſenſe of thy eternity! By the favour of that ſupernal light, we ſhall be able to diſcern the emptineſs of all earthly things, to diſentangle
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our hearts from the love of creatures, and to settle our affections on that supreme, that eternal Good, which alone can make us happy. The thought of eternity will enlighten us in our doubts, it will encourage us in the hour of difficulties, it will strengthen us against temptations, and console us in affliction. At the prospect of a happy eternity we shall despise the vanities of a sinful world, we shall be roused from our sloth, our charity will be kindled into action, and no human consideration will ever draw us from the fidelity which we owe to thee.

O God eternal, the author of life, the immortal and invisible king of ages, be thou always honoured and glorified on earth by all thy creatures! May the heavenly choirs of Saints and Angels proclaim thy praise thro' all eternity! O deign to admit us among their happy number! For we dare no otherwise presume than on thy infinite goodness. In thee, O Lord, we place our trust, in thee we hope. O let us not be confounded for ever! Sensible of our own sinful weakness, we adore thy power, we acknowledge thy tender mercies over us, and we thank thee with all our soul for granting us the time to prepare for life eternal. Too late have we known thee, O ancient truth; too long have we neglected our only lasting good. To live eternally with thee in thy glory is the sublime end, for which thou hast made us. Thro' thy holy grace every moment of our lives shall from this time forward be devoted to that end.

DISCOURSE III.

UPON THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

I am the Lord, and I change not. Malachi
c. iii. v. 6.

ALMIGHTY God in express terms declares himself to be the unchangeable Lord of all things. God is therefore unchangeable in his nature, he is unchangeable in his will, he is unchangeable in his word and promises. For in God, says the Apostle St. James,* there is no change nor even the shadow of change.

God is unchangeable in his nature, because being infinitely perfect he has no innate excellence either to lose or acquire. Wherever any real change takes place, it is by some alteration made in the subject changed; that is to say, the subject must either acquire something, which it had not before, or it must lose something of what it had. Now God can acquire nothing new, because by his essence he is the plenitude of perfection, the plenitude of sanctity, the plenitude of mercy, the plenitude of wisdom, the plenitude of power; in a word, the plenitude of all good. God therefore

fore cannot possibly acquire any sort of perfection, which he has not always possessed in a degree the most perfect. By the same parity of reason he cannot possibly part with any thing he is possessed of. His perfections flow from no other source than from himself, they are inherent in his very nature ; and as they neither are, nor could ever be acquired by any regular progress or accession of parts, so they never can admit of any division or decrease. God always was, what he now is, and he can be no otherwise than he is. What he possesses, he possessed from eternity, nor will he ever possess any thing, which he does not now possess, in one and the same indivisible nature, because within himself he essentially contains all good without mixture, without change or measure.

Time, which measures the duration of earthly things, is changing every instant, and by its rapid tho' silent progress works a universal change in the face of nature. The morning sun rises to cheer us by the return of day, and after a few hours of passing sunshine leaves us again in the shades of night. By the constant succession of such days, we are imperceptibly carried on from infancy to manhood, from one period to another, till life finally wastes away, and death consigns these corruptible bodies to the grave. The swift revolution of seasons one upon another pushes on each fleeting year, and years proceed in one perpetual round, till the world itself shall at length decay with age, and a
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new earth and new heavens shall succeed.* But amidst these wonderful changes of the visible creation, God in his glory shall for ever shine with undiminished light. Unalterable in his nature, as well as in the manner of his existence, he remains above the reach of time, his life receives no increase of age, his eternal duration always is the same, his reign is not measured by the date of years, nor is the splendour of his greatness varied by any alternate change of day and night. In the beginning, O Lord, thou didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, says St. Paul to the Hebrews.† They shall perish, but thou shalt remain : they shall grow old as a garment, and as clothing thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But thou thyself art the same, and thy years shall never fail.

God also is unchangeable in his will. Being directed by an infinite wisdom, by which he perfectly sees and knows all things, that can possibly exist in every circumstance of time and place; he can never have any reason to depart from what he has once decreed. His understanding can acquire no new light, and no additional knowledge. His goodness can propose to itself no motive to determine or to alter his resolution ; his decrees therefore, equally with his essence, admit of no alteration, no change. God always wills what he has once decreed, nor can he ever decree any one thing, which has not been decreed by him from all eternity.

* 2 Peter, C. lii.

† C. i.

ty. When we therefore meet with any phrase in Scripture, which according to the letter seems to indicate a succession of ideas in God, as where he is said* to grieve in his heart, and to repent of his having created man, we cannot possibly understand it in a sense, that expresses a real contrariety of acts in the divine will. For here the inspired writer accommodates himself to our manner of speaking, and in mentioning the deluge, which a just God from eternity had resolved to inflict upon a sinful world, adopts a language which is familiar to the sons of men. In this as well as in many other passages of holy writ, the expression is suited to our weak comprehension of divine things, says the holy doctor St. Ambrose, that we may thereby be made sensible of the heinousness of sin, which is chastised by such heavy vengeance. For the heinousness of sin committed against an infinite majesty is so great, that God, unsusceptible by nature as he is of real anger, of grief, of repentance, of hatred, or of any other passion, is said to be moved with indignation at it,

Nothing can happen in the nature of things, which by an all-knowing God is not foreseen. We therefore deceive ourselves, says St. Austin, if from the various changes that happen in the universe, we conclude there is a change in the divine will, which either produces or permits them. The will of God is immutable and invariable in itself; but the effects it produces are different according

to the difference of good or evil it discovers in us. It shows either mercy to us in regard to our virtues, or severity in punishment of our crimes. The works of God therefore are frequently different, but his will is always the same; always invariable in its views, consistent in its designs, and unchangeable in its decrees. Great God, exclaims the same Saint Austin, thou burnest with love, and art not consumed; thou repentest and art not susceptible of grief; thou appearest to be angry and art always peaceful; that is to say, thou alterest thy works, thou alterest not thy counsel. Thy will is unalterable, thou hast made a decree, and it shall not pass away.* For the Lord is faithful in all his words.†

The heavens and the earth shall pass away, says our blessed Saviour,§ but my words shall never pass away. Therefore God is also unchangeable in his words and promises. God being the very essence of goodness and truth, it is not possible that he should either be deceived in himself, or that he should deceive us. There is nothing hidden from his sight; there is nothing but what he knows; what he therefore speaks must be true. Faithful are all his commandments, says the royal Prophet,† they are confirmed for ever and ever, they are founded in truth and equity. The testimony of God is therefore most certain, his declarations are sincere, his words are infallible, his promises are effectual. Whatever he foretels is most assuredly verified

* Psalm cxlviii. † Psalm cxliv. § Mat. xxiv. † Psalm cxi.

verified by the event, he never fails in the accomplishment of what he has once promised and announced. No, my brethren, God never retracts the word he has given, he never deceives, never baffles us in our expectation of the blessings he has promised. He never shuts his hand nor refuses us his special graces, if we only dilate our hearts to receive them, and are generous in our endeavours to serve him. This it is, which forms the indissoluble tie, the sacred connexion, that subsists between God and man. This animates our confidence in the divine goodness, and fills our souls with a lively expectation of being eternally happy. For the word of God is the sure warrant of our faith, his promises are the foundation of our hope, and his goodness is the motive of our love.

What depends on man is every hour liable to change, as is man himself; but on the part of God all is fixt and permanent. From eternity he decreed to make man according to his own image and likeness, and he decreed to make him free. He has done so. Without infringing our liberty, his merciful design is, that all men should be saved,* and come to the knowledge of his eternal truths. For this purpose he has furnished us with the necessary helps of grace and nature, leaving it to our own choice to co-operate with him or not, by the free use of those powers which he has blest us with. He deters us from vice by the threats of everlasting

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* Tim. ii.

punishments, and he invites us to virtue by the promise of everlasting rewards. If we therefore are deficient on our part, if we deviate from our duty and unfortunately lose our souls, to ourselves alone we must impute the loss. The benevolent will of God is not changed in our regard, he still continues true to his word, faithful in his promises, and inexhaustible in his goodness. By an eternal and immutable decree, he renders to each one according to his works. Both his justice and his mercy endure for evermore. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away.

To these immutable perfections, which we behold in God, how opposite are the ways of men? How uncertain is man in his resolves, how unsettled in his schemes, how unsteady in his friendships, how irresolute in his promises, how wavering even in his faith and religious principles? Changeable by nature, and restless in his disposition, he varies according to the various impressions he receives from the objects, that surround him, one while relinquishing what he had eagerly pursued, and then warmly embracing what he had quarrelled with before. This undoubtedly is a weakness extremely humbling to human pride, and yet upon reflection we shall find it to be a weakness inherent in our very nature. It springs from the ignorance of our understanding, from the fickleness of our temper, and from the contrariety of our passions. From this
triple

triple source we may trace the universal ebb and flow of human inconstancy.

1st. The capacity of man's mind is too narrow to comprehend many things at once, and its discernment too weak to discover at first sight all, that can be discovered even in the most trivial things.

The more we examine, the more we discover; upon a more serious consideration, new motives, new circumstances, and new difficulties appear, which in the beginning were not so much as thought of. Upon our being better informed, we immediately perceive, that a change is necessary, and that to do well fresh measures must be taken, and some other system adopted. In such circumstances reason not only approves, but even dictates the change. For it is a false honour not to own the force of reason, and downright obstinacy to reject the light of conviction. Wilfully to persist, or not persist in a known error, is what distinguishes the bad man from the good. It is no disgrace to acknowledge the mistake we were in; it is honourable to desist, when we are evidently wrong.

2dly. Another source of human inconstancy arises from the fickle disposition of the heart. We are naturally pleased, and easily gained by the objects that flatter our senses. Now as these objects incessantly vary under the different forms and colours, in which they meet the eye, so various likewise are the

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the notions and affections, which they excite in the heart. To-day we are charmed with one thing, to-morrow with another. This object pleases for a moment, and the moment after it is exchanged for something else. Even the same object, placed in different circumstances, and in different points of view, is as eagerly pursued at one time, as it is suddenly relinquished at another. Tired and disgusted with the toy, that glittered at a distance, we as readily give it up, as the child parts with its plaything for another equally insignificant. Thus by a multiplicity of deluding objects the heart of man is continually divided in its pursuits. Thus it is always roving and always changing from one thing to another, without settling upon any, because amongst all the goods of earth, it can meet with none, that are equal to its desires; none, that can content it long; none, that can make it happy. O God, thou hast made us for thyself alone, and restless is our heart, says St. Austin, until it rests in thee.

3dly. The chief cause and most fertile source of the instability of man are his passions. Isaiah* compares the heart of a worldly man to a raging sea, which cannot rest. The passions that arise within him, are as so many restless waves, which, being once put into a ferment, distract and toss the troubled soul a thousand different ways, according to the different conflicts they excite within her. And as it is not possible, that the sea should continue calm, when

* C. lvii.

when jarring tempests burst upon its surface ; so it is equally impossible for man to possess his soul in peace, when assaulted by the violence of unruly passions, which he fosters within his breast. At one time it is his vanity, at another it is his pride or intemperance, that torments him : now envy gnaws his heart with vexation, or anger prompts him to revenge ; now the love of power, of pleasures, or of riches distracts his thoughts with a variety of anxious cares and uneasinesses. One while his ambition swells to the pitch of insolence, then disappointment throws him into a state of dejection, and sometimes all his passions break out with united force, and exercise by turns their cruel tyranny over him. He is consequently hurried in his projects thro' as many changes and vicissitudes, as there are different objects and incentives of his passions. Thus floating on the tide of endless fears and desires, the human heart is in continual agitation and trouble. For such is its misfortune, that it seldom thinks of enjoying the present, but is always pining after some distant good. And this is the deplorable condition, to which every Christian is exposed, as long as he lays not his irregular appetites under due restraint, or squares not his conduct by the steady principles of virtue and religion.

The world in general is governed by maxims peculiar to itself. The bulk of mankind make those maxims their rule of life, and therefore little else than inconstancy and change is to be seen
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amongst them. Hence the world is as changeable in its projects, and as faithless in its promises, as it is unsteady in its connexions and its friendships. Friendship must have something more than a meer sympathy of tempers to make it lasting: it must be founded in principle, and nourished by confidence. To be true it must be equally steady, whether fortune frown or smile upon it; and such a friendship the world but seldom knows. Upon the motives of interest or convenience we see societies no sooner formed than broken. For since they have no other than some temporary consideration to hold them together, the moment that fails they dissolve away into as many separate parties as they have separate interests to pursue.

Such is the inconstancy of the world in its boasted friendships. Are its words and promises more to be relied upon? The world promises a peace, which it cannot give, makes offers of service, which it never performs; enters into engagements, which it often breaks. Nothing is so common with the world as repeated protestations of friendship, great professions of esteem, flattering smiles and careffes, kind and complaisant expressions without end. These please, and put us in good humour at the time, but the event too often shows, that nothing more was meant than a passing ceremony. Compliments may flow like milk and honey from the lips, but unless they speak the language of the heart, they are no better than a set of unmeaning words

words written in the loofest fand ; the first wind that blows effaces every character.

The schemes and projects of the world pass in the same unsettled manner. Great undertakings are set on foot, and then abandoned ; various resolutions formed, and then forgotten ; many things begun, and never finished. Hence the world is, as it were, one great moving scene of inconsistency, a passing figure of divers forms and colours, that vary every instant. From a world so false, so fickle, and deceitful, we have no lasting good to hope for. Tho' we labour in its service, it seldom furnishes enough to requite our pains ; it can never give enough to satisfy our desires. Let us then turn our thoughts on God, who alone can fix our hearts, and bestow a reward equal to our wishes. There left us rest. For being once engaged in the divine service, we can have no solid reason to change our course. The motives, which first induced us to give our hearts to God, will for ever retain their full force. God is now the same he always was, infinitely great and good, infinitely amiable and beautiful in all perfection. His goodness towards us is not lessened. As he created, so he still preserves us by his power, with the same bounteous hand he relieves us in our wants, he encourages us by the same promises, he holds the same crown over our heads to reward us for all we do or suffer for his sake. By the same title of gratitude we are therefore bound to love him with affection,
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and to serve him with fidelity to the very end, as long as life shall last.

Notwithstanding this, how much inconstancy have we been witnesses of, and what changes have we seen? behold a prodigal youth, who had left his heavenly Father's house, now returning from his evil ways. He had been struck at the danger he was in of being eternally lost, he was softened with compunction for his sins, he humbly confessed his guilt, and earnestly sued for pardon from his offended God. Being received into favour again, with gratitude he acknowledged his creator's goodness, he began to serve him with fresh fervour, he was fed with the milk of consolation, and enjoyed a serenity of mind, which in the midst of his earthly pursuits he had never felt. How came he then to turn from the Lord his God, and to relapse into his former sins?

By the ministry of his holy word, by the advice of friends, by secret inspirations and remorse of conscience, God is pleased to call the sinner to repentance. You, dear Christian, may perchance have heard his voice sweetly calling upon you. You listened to it, and was roused to a sense of your duty. The day of grace began to dawn upon your soul, you generously took the resolution, and even fixed the time of reconciling yourself to God. But drawn away by the force of habit, or of bad example, how quickly did you change your mind?

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In the hurry of your worldly pursuits and engagements you either forgot or resolved to defer the time of your repentance ; you then began to think there was no need of any immediate reform, you kicked against the stings of conscience, and in the end concluded not to break the chain of your amusements. In vain did God still knock and call for admittance into your heart. His voice was either not heard or not attended to. For on a soul that is hardened by neglect, the word of God makes no sensible impression. God is then provoked at so obstinate a resistance ; he no longer calls but retires in dreadful silence ; he finally withdraws his slighted graces, to bestow them where they will be more gratefully received.

Some Christians there are, who by a happy turn of mind seem to be born for virtuous actions, and these also have their changes and their starts of inconsistency. Having felt the influence of divine grace, they began to serve God with their whole heart ; they promised eternal fidelity to him, and made it their study to do his will in all things. But no sooner did temptations rise, or some unexpected difficulty occur, than their virtue was at a stand, their resolutions were shaken, and the fair fabrick they were raising seemed to be upon the point of being overturned.

Can we without tears behold those unhappy men, who by a change of principle and manners are be-
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come enemies of the cross of Christ, as St. Paul speaks to the Philippians?*

By the care of good and virtuous parents they had been principled betimes in their duty towards God and man; they had been distinctly taught what they were to believe and what to practise for salvation; by their docility and behaviour they gave hopes of being one day the ornament of their family as well as of the religion they professed. But how soon, alas, did the prospect change? Scarce were they acquainted with the world, but they became familiar with its vices. The good principles, which they had imbibed at first, were soon forgot and those of libertinism, irreligion, and impiety have been adopted in their stead. Is the gospel then no longer to be believed, or have its precepts ceased to be in force? Has God altered his holy law in favour of a corrupt world, or can the world justify a breach of the sacred promises we have made to God? The world may establish new customs, new laws, and systems for the regulation of civil life; it may establish even vice by maxim, and make it current by example; but it can never change the nature, nor invalidate the force of our Christian obligations. What our great God has once enacted, either for our belief or our practice, is not to be reversed by any human authority whatever. Human inventions and fashions vary by caprice at different times and in different nations; but the word of God never varies. Faith is but one,† it changes not by age

* C. iii.

† Eph. iv.

age or climate. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but of the law of God, my Brethren, not so much as a single point, or the least tittle shall ever be blotted out.*

In the portrait we have drawn of a changeable world, you may perchance have observed some distinguishable features of your own. For how often with the world have you faltered in your principle, how often have you varied in your choice between good and evil? What irresolution in your conduct, what unsteadiness and infidelity in the divine service have you not betrayed? You once were fixt in the choice you had made of a virtuous life, you ran the ways of God's commandments without reproof, you dilated your hearts, and God replenished them with the unction of his holy spirit. How came you then to relent, and why did you turn your back upon him. Was he not still your Maker, your Redeemer, your father, your Benefactor, and your comforter in affliction? Is he not the same he always was? Has ever he ceased to encourage, to care for and strengthen you in all your trials? Is he altered in his affection or in his tender goodness towards you? Does he not possess, does he not show the same kindness, the same mercy, the same liberality, the same benevolent dispositions to make you eternally happy? O my Brethren what has since seduced you from the path you walked in? Your days were then serene ;
they

* Mat. v.

they were the most cheerful days, because the most virtuous of your life. In creatures, is there any thing more charming, more desirable or lasting, than what you find in God? Why have you therefore changed, why are you become ungrateful and perfidious against your kind, your friendly Benefactor, your Father, and your God? But what are the fruits you have reaped from the unhappy change? Consult your hearts and they will tell you nothing but remorse, uneasiness, and affliction of mind.

O that you had steadily pursued your once virtuous course! How precious in the sight of God would you now be, and what meritorious treasures would you now possess? A charming peace, which the world has not to give, would now sooth your souls and a holy confidence in the divine bounty would dispel the fears of death. This is a comfort I know you sigh after. Sentiments of regret for having fallen from your duty, and an ardent desire to repair your loss undoubtedly warm your breasts. These sentiments are the language of the Holy Ghost speaking to your hearts; they are the effects of his working grace, and a mark of his tender mercy, inviting you back to receive the favours you once enjoyed. In this, O Lord, we acknowledge thy goodness and adore thy love.

To serve thee with new zeal is indeed the present purpose of our hearts, but to persevere in that purpose

purpose must be thy gracious gift. Conscious of our own weakness, we know that without thy aid our best endeavours will be fruitless. Unsteady as the reed which bends to every wind, we stand in continual want of thy strengthening grace to fix our resolution. We live in the midst of a perilous world, where we meet with as many occasions to draw us from our duty, as there are temptations to seduce us into sin. Cast then, O God, an eye of compassion on us, succour our distress, and as our hope is all in thee, so be thou our help and our salvation.

Having thus considered the world's mutability and our own, in opposition to the unchangeable perfections of God, we ought, as children of our heavenly father, to excite in ourselves a sincere desire of copying after the divine original, by a steady perseverance in our Christian duties. For this purpose let us take the following resolutions.

1st. To repent of all past infidelities, and to guard against a relapse.

2dly. To mistrust our own lights, and to undertake nothing of moment without mature deliberation and advice.

3dly. To engage in no business of importance, tho' ever so laudible, when the mind is either blinded by indiscreet zeal, or disturbed by passion.

In

In the moment of hurry, things oftentimes appear through a deceitful medium, and what may then seem eligible, will perchance upon cool reflection be judged improper.

4thly. To enter upon no new obligations, which either interfere with the common duties of life, or are hard to be complied with. Easy tasks in the beginning pave the way to more arduous undertakings: it is no less rash to undertake what you are unable to perform, than disgraceful to desist from what you have prudently begun.

5thly. To seek from God success in your undertakings, by the means of prayer and other works of piety, as reason and religion teach us. For without God* we can do nothing.

* Jehn. xv.

DISCOURSE IV.

UPON THE IMMENSITY OF GOD.

Thou alone art the most High. Pf. lxxxii.

IMMENSITY is an absolute quality, which excludes all comparison of greater or less from the idea we have of it. Immensity therefore in its full meaning is only applicable to that, than which there is nothing greater. For as that alone is properly said to be eternal, which exceeds every date of time, so that alone is said to be immense, which surpasses all measure of extension. A pure creature, such as an Angel is, may be denominated great within its own sphere of limited perfection; it may be great in knowledge, in sanctity and power, even beyond the reach of our understanding: but being finite by the very nature of its existence, it never can in the strict use of language be styled immense. For to be immense is to be nothing less than infinite.

Immensity therefore is a perfection, which solely belongs to God. By this, God is unbounded in the manner of his existence: by this, he is actually diffused through every part of the visible and invisible creation. God is all and in every one

of his creatures at the same time ; he is in all places, even the most discontiguous, without being separated by distance. or confined by space. Hence he reaches infinitely beyond all, that is created, not by any local extension of parts, for parts in a pure spirit there can be none, but by the universal presence of his divinity, which is indivisible and immense.

Such is the idea, which reason teaches us to form of the immensity of God, and in this the dictates of reason are perfectly consonant with the word of God himself, whose style is truly noble and sublime on this subject. Am I, think ye, a God only at hand, and not a God afar off, says the Lord ? Shall a man hide himself in a place the most secret, and I not see him ? Do I not fill the heaven and the earth, says the Lord. ?* O Israel, how great is the house of the Lord, and how vast is the extent of his place of residence, says the Prophet Baruch ? † It is great and has no end : it is high, it is immeasurable. The whole circumference of heaven is not large enough to contain him. Wherefore what wilt thou do, cries holy Job, ‡ and whither canst thou go not to be seen by God ? For God by virtue of his unbounded immensity reaches above the height of the heavens, and beyond the length of the earth ; he reaches beyond the width of the ocean, and even below the bot-
tomless

* Jer. xxiii. † C. iii. ‡ C. xi.

tomless depth of the infernal pit. Yes, there is not the smallest spot upon the globe we inhabit, which he does not occupy by his presence, and there is no void ever so extensive, which he does not fill. He is intimately present in every individual part and corner of the universe : he is above the earth, because he is seated above the summit of its highest mountains ; he is round the earth, because he encompasses it on every side ; he is underneath the earth, because he supports it from its very foundations ; he is in fine within the earth, because he cements and holds it together in all its parts. He therefore comprises all, and is comprised by none ; he embraces all, he contains all, and nothing can contain him ; for infinite greatness admits no bounds. Being in all places he has every thing near, nothing distant from him. The most lonesome deserts, the deepest caverns, and the most hidden recesses of the earth are always under his immediate view : with a single span he comprehends the wide circumference of this habitable globe, which in comparison of his divine immensity, is infinitely less than the smallest atom is with respect to the whole earth.

From the earth let us lift up our eyes and survey the spacious heavens with all their shining host. Behold the firmament extended far and wide, without the appearance of any bounds to confine it. Behold the planets, the sun, moon, and stars, richly scattered by the hand of God

through the vast expanse, like so many distant worlds, some seemingly fixed in their exalted stations, and others with incredible velocity rolling round the common centre in their respective orbits. The bright magnificence they display, and the circles they describe in their annual revolutions, carry our imagination far beyond the uttermost expansion of the heavens, that our eye can reach to. The idea they convey is noble and sublime. But sublime and noble as the idea is, it presents us with nothing, that bears the least proportion with the greatness of God ; nothing, but what is ruled and limited by the power of God ; nothing but what exists and moves within the sphere of the immensity of God.

Nor are we to rest here. For beyond the limits of this inferior world, and above the sphere of these visible heavens, the light of revelation discovers to us other heavens, and another world still more glorious, and still more perfect, yet all within the bosom of the same divine immensity : a world not created for the use of man in his state of pilgrimage and trial, but reserved for his enjoyment in a life of endless felicity. There God reigns in the kingdom of his glory, and that is the kingdom, which in his infinite wisdom he has prepared from the beginning, for the reward of his Elect. That kingdom is therefore such, as became a God of infinite power to prepare for the most excellent and the most deserving of his creatures :

creatures : it is such, as no mortal eye can see, and no heart of man has yet conceived.

Behold here the utmost extent of all created greatness ; an extent, which no mortal power can presume to scan, and which heavenly spirits alone can fully comprehend. But the more we consider this vast extent of the glory and of the majesty of God, as it is manifested to us in the formation of the heavens and the earth, the more we see, how impossible it is to form an adequate idea of the immensity of God. For the immensity of God comprises not only the infinite distance there is between the Creator and his creatures, but also the infinite perfections he possesses within himself. God is immense in all his attributes : he is immense in wisdom, in goodness, in power, and in every other divine property. Because being a God infinitely perfect, he possesses every quality of the divine nature with unlimited perfection. Hence whether we consider what God has absolutely done in the creation of all things visible and invisible, or what in another providence he might have done, we shall discover nothing but what falls infinitely short of divine perfection. He might, if in his wisdom he had so decreed, have introduced into the creation another order of things every way more wonderful and more perfect than what we see in the present system. This assertion is founded on the certain knowledge we have of his inexhaustible omnipotence. He therefore might have
 created

created a variety of other worlds, increasing every instant in magnitude and beauty one above another to the end of time. By such an increase of created objects, his immensity would have undergone no diminution, no change ; it would have felt no encroachment upon its boundless empire ; it would have remained still unequalled, still supereminent and inviolable. For as his goodness can never be exhausted by the graces he bestows, so neither can his greatness be lessened by the wonders he performs, nor his immensity be confined by the creatures he gives existence to.

Strongly impressed with the idea of this immensity of God, the Royal Prophet speaks of it in terms the most expressive and pathetic, as if he felt himself enclosed, as it were, and environed by the divine presence on every side. Wonderful, O Lord, is thy knowledge to me, says he,* it is great, and I cannot reach unto it. Whither then shall I fly to be out of thy sight, or whither can I go to lie concealed from thy all-piercing eye ? If I ascend in thought to Heaven, thou art there upon thy throne of glory ; or if I descend to hell, thou art present there, heaping dreadful punishments upon thine enemies. Should I take wing with the rising morn, and direct my flight to the extremities of the sea, thy presence would accompany me even thither, and thy right hand would still hold me. Wicked then would be the thought and vain the

* Psalm cxxxviii,

the attempt to fly from the face of God. For neither land, nor sea, nor heaven, nor hell itself has any retreat for man, where he can lurk unseen, and remain hidden from that divine eye, to which even the thickest darkness is not dark, and night itself is as light as day.†

To enforce this truth of the divine immensity, St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians§ to ground themselves in the knowledge of it, that as far as human capacity, aided by faith, can attain to, they might be enabled to comprehend what is the breadth, the length, the height, and depth thereof. The Apostle here adapts his expression to our usual mode of speaking, and makes use of such terms as seem best suited to give us an idea of something greater than we can comprehend. For by this he informs us, that there is no place on earth so remote, and no extent of sea so wide, that in the highest heavens there is no point so high, and in the bottomless abyss no depth so low, which the Almighty does not reach to and infinitely beyond. Some interpreters indeed expound this text of the Apostle in a moral sense, as if he meant by the length he speaks of, to express the longanimity of God in waiting for sinners after their call to repentance; by the breadth to specify the immense charity of God in extending his blessings to all men and nations, even to the remotest bounds of the earth; by the height to extol the magnificence of God, in bestowing
such

† Ibid. § C. iii.

such ample rewards as he does upon his elect in heaven ; by the depth in fine to mark the dreadful justice of God in heaping everlasting punishments upon the reprobate below. But whether we explain the Apostle's words in this meaning or in that, the idea they convey of the divine immensity is equally sublime.

Speculative as this consideration of the immensity of God may seem at first sight, yet upon examination nothing will appear more practical in fact, on account of the strong influence it has upon human actions. That God is immense is a truth we cannot doubt of. To be immense is inseparable from the very nature of his divinity. That God is every where present is likewise a truth we cannot question. This truth we should always bear in mind, since it is no less interesting to us, than certain in itself. For while we reflect, that we are under the immediate inspection of God, the sovereign Lord and judge of all our actions, how is it possible to be deficient in the service, or unfaithful in the duty we owe him ? To walk in the divine presence, and to keep God constantly in view, is the direct way to Christian perfection : it is the way, which the Saints both of the old and new testament invariably pursued. Knowing that the Lord their God had his eye day and night fixed upon them, they inflexibly withstood every temptation, and broke thro' every obstacle, that opposed their progress. Full of that salutary hope, which lay within their
breasts,

breasts, they cheerfully ran the course of virtue, as tho' they had seen the hand of God holding out a crown of glory for the reward of their labours.

Heaven indeed is the place, which God has chosen for his seat of glory. There the brightness of his divinity shines revealed, there the blessed Saints properly behold and enjoy him face to face. Thither we are taught, in expectation of the same happiness, to direct our thoughts, thither we raise our hearts, as often as we compose ourselves to pray, and from thence we hope to receive every good and every perfect gift, which descends from the father of lights. But to enjoy the presence of God in the manner, that is suited to our mortal state, it is not necessary to ascend in spirit into heaven as if he resided no where else. To converse with him, to warm our affections for him, to communicate our sentiments to him, and to unite our hearts intimately with him, we have but to rouse our faith, and we shall find him always by us, always with us, and always in us. For he is not at any distance from each one of us, says St. Paul,* in him we live, in him we move, and in him we have our very being.

A fish swimming in the sea is not so thoroughly encompassed by the watery deep, as we are by the divine immensity: for the sea has its bounds, immensity has none. Which ever way we move,
and

* Acts xviii.

and to whatever point we direct our steps. it is still within the ocean of that boundless immensity of God, which surrounds and invests us on every side. God by his essence is not only diffused around us in the light we see, and in the air we breathe, he is moreover infused into our very souls within us: he penetrates our whole substance, he infolds and carries us in his bosom: so that we cannot move a hand or foot, which he is not witness of, nor form a passing thought, which he does not see, nor speak so much as a single word, which he does not hear. The immensity of God therefore constitutes the most intimate, and the most perfect connexion that can possibly exist between the Creator and his creatures.

God is always with us by his power, because by his power he once made and still preserves us. God is every where by his wisdom, because by his wisdom he knows and sees all things in every circumstance of time and place. By his providence God is in every part of the creation, because by his providence he governs the whole, and directs every individual portion thereof. But for this the reality of his immediate presence is not absolutely necessary. For tho' he resided at a distance from the earth, and were actually present in no other place but heaven, he might nevertheless distinctly see from thence, whatever passes here below amongst his creatures, and by the means of his ministering spirits he might with equal certainty direct and move, preserve and govern

vern the whole system of the universe. In that supposition his divine influence might have been as powerful over all his creatures, but it would have operated at a distance from them : whereas his immensity renders him actually present with us, not merely by his inspirations and graces, or by any other operation of his fatherly providence over us, but by his personal essence and very being. How comfortable to a Christian in affliction is the thought, that God the rewarder of virtue is always present with him !

In the immensity of God the whole universe subsists, as in a boundless ocean. Now if we cast our eyes upon this lower world, which we inhabit, and compare it not with the supreme and most high God, but only with those created luminaries, which shine so numerous and so bright above us, how inconsiderable, how little does this world appear ? How little in its dimensions, how little in its projects, how little in its rewards and boasted promises ? Yet little as it is, this world has the art of imposing upon our reason, and of engaging millions in its service by holding out something to them, which has the appearance of being great. A man of fortune, for instance, wishes to increase his landed property : he meets with an advantageous offer, he succeeds, and fancies he has made a great acquisition. What is it ? Nothing more than a little spot of ground added to the little he was in possession of before. A seaman goes in search

search of undiscovered lands, he braves the storms and perils of the ocean, and fetches at last the circumference of the globe: he comes home justly applauded and admired for the exploit he has performed. What is it? Why he has sailed round this little ball of earth, which, with respect to God, is no more than a floating atom in the boundless width of his immensity. A king by the valour of his troops requires an addition of territory to his former possessions; he prides himself upon the fortunate event, and glories in his mighty conquest, the conquest of a few feet more of scanty empire, with some passing acclamations of applause, which flatter for a day and then perish with the sound thereof. Warlike heroes of antiquity have been dignified with the name of great for the empires they founded, and for the actions they performed. But how is their glory fallen, and how is their memory almost forgotten? They are sunk like their fellow mortals into dust; circumscribed and narrow were the limits both of their life and empire. So transient is the sunshine of worldly glory!

But such is the illusion, and such in general is the turn of worldly men, that whatever strikes or flatters their ambition, they fancy it to be something great. That a Christian who has faith and reason for his guide, should be so far deluded as to make himself a slave to the creatures which were designed for his rational use and benefit; that a
Christian,

Christian, who is born for heaven, should so far forget himself, as to seek no other than a transient happiness in earthly objects, is a subject of equal pity and surprize. Thro' the weakness of corrupt nature our ideas of happiness are already too contracted, and we contract them still more by placing our affections upon creatures too little to content us, and too imperfect to satisfy even our present wants. The soul of man is too exalted in her views to be satisfied with any thing less than God. Notwithstanding the clog of mortal clay, which for the present confines her to the earth, she aspires to a greatness infinitely above all earthly greatness; she aspires to heaven. She has an inbred tendency to God, her Creator, who alone is capable of conferring a happiness equal to her desires.

Let us then dilate our hearts, and soaring in sentiment above the views of a narrow-minded world, let us act and think in all things as becomes Christians predestined to a state of immortality. For by adoption we are the sons of God, and by his grace we are heirs to the kingdom of heaven. A lively faith in the divine presence will confirm us in these Christian sentiments, it will restrain all inordinate desires, it will teach us to make use of the world as tho' we saw God in all his creatures. For by the immensity of his divine essence, God reaches from end to end, and through every individual part of the creation. We therefore know him to be actually present in every place we go to. We
know

know that he is in all his creatures, and that all his creatures are in him. By him all things are preserved and animated, and in him they all exist. Hence he has not only ordained the different parts of the creation for our service, but he also imparts to them the immediate powers, by which they serve us. It is he, it is God himself, who enlightens us by the light we see, who refreshes us by the air we breathe, who nourishes us by the food we take, who supports us by the earth we stand upon.

Hence in the second place we know, and a pleasing comfort it is to know, that God is actually within us, within our heart, within our mind, within our very substance and in every power and faculty of our soul and body. Immenſe and infinite as he is, God himſelf whole and entire is always with us, and always in us. From ourſelves we inherit no good, but in God we poſſeſs the plenitude of goodneſs, of power and wiſdom, ready to expand and communicate its influence to us according to the meaſure of our wants and deſires. For in God we are as in an ever-flowing fountain, as in a delightful refuge, as in a place of ſafety, as in the ſource of light; or to ſay better we are as darling children in the boſom of a moſt tender parent. There we reſoſe, there we reſt; there we forget our griefs, and there we conſole ourſelves under the evils of the preſent life.

Hence in the third place it is a ſubject of ſingular comfort to reflect, that God not only knows, but that

that by his presence he is actually witness to all we do, and to all we suffer. However great or painful may be the pressure of affliction, where is the Christian, who does not feel himself relieved, the moment he considers that God is there ready to support, to succour and to strengthen him in his sufferings? That he is present with him not only as the witness, but as the rewarder of all he patiently endures? I am with him in his tribulation, says he, by the mouth of the Psalmist.* Let him wait but a little while, and I will deliver him, I will exalt him to glory, I will crown him with a length of days, and will show him my salvation.

Hence, in the fourth place, we shall be animated to a faithful diligence in the divine service, whether it be to decline from evil, or to do good. For if the presence of a fellow Christian, whom we respect and fear, is oftentimes enough to prevent our transgressing the bounds of our duty, how much more efficacious will be the presence of a God, who is at once to be the judge and punisher of our crime? Sinner, says Saint Austin, before thou sin find out a place if thou canst, where God shall not see thee. What? insult the almighty to his face, make him witness of his own dishonour, and defy him in his very presence? Dost thou not provoke his arm already lifted up, and darest thou provoke the blow, which upon the spot would strike thee down to the bottomless abyss.

The

* Psalm xc,

The generous Christian on the other hand is equally animated by the same divine presence, to discharge every part of his duty with all the attention he is capable of. If he meets with difficulties in his way, as in the way of virtue difficulties will be always found, far from being dismayed he embraces them as the means of proving his fidelity, and of testifying his love. A soldier under his Prince's eye is equally alert upon the march as he is steady in the field of battle. Awed by respect, he utters no complaint against the service he is upon, he repines at no hardship, he shrinks from no duty, and disobeys no command. So it is with the Christian in his spiritual warfare, where he likewise has his labours to undergo, his difficulties and struggles to surmount. He remembers that God is there the witness of his conduct, and that if there are battles to be fought, there are also victories to be won.

Thanks, great God, and praise be to thee from all thy creatures, since thou hast thus rendered the knowledge of thy divine immensity not less useful to us, than it is glorious to thyself. Since within the infinity of thy Being thou comprisest all things visible and invisible, and fillest the Universe with the plenitude of thy essence; since beyond the utmost bounds of the heavens, and within the inmost recesses of the earth and sea, thou residest with all thy power, with all thy majesty, and with all thy glory, can there be room for man to boast of any thing he has, as if it were his own? Where but
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in his own nothingness can the seat of vanity exist? Where but in his own weakness will he find a lurking place for pride? If thou dwellest in every imperceptible atom without being restrained in thy greatness; if thou art present in the most distant places without being divided in thy essence; if thou penetratest into the thickest darkness without diminishing one single beam of thy divine light; if thou descendest into the deepest dungeons without degrading thy majesty; and what is still more wonderful, if thou art even in the breasts of sinners without staining thy sanctity, or lessening the splendour of thy glory; how adorable doest thou appear, and with what profound humility ought we to remember and respect thy presence?

Quicken then, O Lord, our faith that we may respect and see thee in all creatures. By the aid of thy holy grace we will be as circumspect in our conduct to please thee, and as guarded in our words and actions not to offend thee, as though we saw thee present before our eyes: and since our most hidden thoughts, since every secret motion and affection of our hearts are ever naked to thy view, these also will we strictly watch, lest through the subtle windings of our passions, sin may steal in, and sully the purity of our souls.

DISCOURSE V.

UPON THE SANCTITY OF GOD.

There is none so holy as the Lord is. 1 Kings, c.
ii, v. 2.

GOD is holy, and of his holiness there is no bound. God is holy in himself, says the royal Prophet,* he is holy in his name,§ he is holy in all his works.† The scripture moreover tells us, that he is even magnificent‡ in holiness. The holiness of his essence therefore infinitely surpasses all other holiness. Properly speaking, he is the holy One, and the only One by excellence, who can challenge to himself the name of Holy. But when we say that God is holy, and holy even by excellence above all other things that are, our expression falls far short of the idea we wish to convey; we must also add, that He is holiness itself.

Holiness is a necessary perfection of the Divinity. It is inseparable from the notion we have of an all-perfect Being; it constitutes his very essence. From hence as from the living and inexhaustible spring of perfection is derived every degree of sanctity

*Psalm xcvi.

§ Psalm cx.

† Psalm cxiv.

‡ Exod. xv.

sanctity that exists in heaven and on earth. How great, how glorious are the prerogatives, that accompany the holiness of Saints and Angels? Yet they are but as so many slender streams, that flow from the boundless ocean of the Divinity, or as so many feeble rays, which issue from the sun of justice. For holiness is of too refined and of too sublime a nature to spring from any other source than from God himself.

As God by the sanctity of his essence is the fountain, so he is also the pattern of all perfect holiness. In the heavenly spirits we behold the living images of a most transcendent sanctity; but with all its transcendancy it is still a limited and created sanctity. In the saints we behold innumerable examples of most wonderful holiness, which they have traced out to us in their pure and spotless lives. But these examples of the Saints, wonderful as they are, have their limits, they are tinged with defects of human nature, and partake of the imperfections of frail mortality. In God alone is found that unlimited, that full and perfect holiness, which is, which always was, and always will be without spot, without blemish, without the smallest shadow of diminution or change.

The holiness of God being thus equally unlimited and unchangeable in his very nature, God is the strong support of all sanctity on earth. The sanctity, which reigns among the blessed in heaven,

is constant, firm, and undisturbed in its repose. But the sanctity, which animates the souls of men on earth, is still in a state of trial, and liable to be overthrown. Unstable as the reed which shakes with every breeze, it wavers to and fro, as the storm of passions assault the soul. Exposed as we are to the continual danger of being seduced in the midst of a perverse world, where we meet with as many obstacles to deter us from virtue, as there are incentives to allure us into vice, we stand always in need of some strong support to determine and fix our resolution in what is good. This support we receive from the immutable sanctity, from the all-supporting grace of God.

The holiness of God is not only our strength and support in virtue, by infusing his efficacious graces into our souls, it moreover is the reward and crown of our virtues. God himself assures us of it. Fear not, says he,* I will be your protector and your reward exceeding great. Riches, titles, dignities and honours are the great and utmost recompence of human services. The world has nothing greater to bestow. But when God prepares a recompence for labours undergone, and for actions performed in his service, no earthly crowns nor sceptres are proposed, no worldly wealth, no transitory titles or honours are so much as mentioned. Those things may indeed attract the notice of human vanity

* Gen. xv.

nity and ambition, but they are too insignificant to make any part of that immense, of that eternal reward, which a God of infinite sanctity bestows upon his saints in heaven: for he bestows himself. They shall be his people,§ and God himself with them shall be their God.† The Lord God shall enlighten them; they shall see his face, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The saints, in their way to heaven, had like us many difficulties to struggle with. They had many sacrifices to make; they had the allurements of corrupt nature to resist; they had passions to subdue; they had foreign and domestic enemies to conquer. They were not daunted, they persisted in their glorious undertaking, faithful to the end. Therefore God himself who is the plenitude of happiness, is their great, their everlasting reward. It is what we humbly hope for.

Faithful Christians, who sojourn in this vale of tears, you must expect to meet with contradictions and sufferings, while the time of your mortal pilgrimage continues. It is a time of trial and probation. By sufferings God is pleased to try and purify the virtues of his Elect. You are upon your way to heaven; you perhaps find it rough and beset with thorns. Weak nature upon occasions may be tempted to repine at hardships, to which the duties of your state expose you. It may labour

labour under the weight of affliction, it may sometimes fret at the pain it feels from the sting of persecution or oppression. But, my Brethren, lose not patience: lift up your heads,* behold the day of your release approaches. Console yourselves with the pleasing thought of a happy Hereafter: a few months, or at most a few years of struggle more, and endless comfort is your own.

Lift up your eyes and hearts to heaven, the God of sanctity there presents himself to you. He is preparing for you a crown of immortality, he holds it even now over your heads for the encouragement of your hope. A God of infinite sanctity has furnished you with the means of sanctifying your souls, and if you only employ those means, the same God awaits you at the close of life to crown your virtues with never ending glory in the bosom of his divinity.

Let us enter a little more diffusely upon this sublime subject, which is so worthy of our most attentive consideration. Let us dive into the property of the holiness of God, and we shall find two leading characters, which distinguish it from his other attributes, an infinite love of moral good on one hand, and an insuperable hatred of moral evil on the other.

His infinite love of good inspires him with such affection for a just soul, that he declares it † to be
his

* Luke xxi. † Prov. viii.

his delight to dwell with the children of men. For in our souls, as long as they are not defiled with sin, he actually dwells as in a consecrated temple, sanctifying and adoring them with his most precious graces. Purity of manners, innocency of life, and cleanness of heart have such charms in his divine, eye that he has inspired his holy writer to search thro' the most exquisite beauties of nature for expressions to convey to us the love he has for virtue. My beloved, the daughter of Jerufalem,* says he, speaking of a just soul, is the most beautiful among women, she floweth with delights, she is all fair, and there is no blemish in her: she is as the rising morn, comely as the moon, and chosen as the sun.

Hence of all the titles given to God by the inspired writers, we meet with none so frequently, as that of Holy; and on that account it may be deemed his chosen characteristic, as peculiarly expressive of his divine excellence. It is the title, as St. John declares in his revelations,§ which the heavenly Quires incessantly repeat, as if in that one attribute alone the whole perfection of the Divinity were eminently comprised. The holy Prophet Isaiah tells us,† that in a vision he saw the Lord of glory sitting upon an elevated throne, with a troop of melodious Seraphims standing round, and proclaiming with one universal voice of celestial harmony, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts.

hosts. God is infinitely great, he is omnipotent, he is eternal, immutable and immense without bound or measure : yet of these perfections no mention is made in that exalted canticle of praise, which was heard by the Prophet. It was the Sanctity, the wonderful and ravishing Sanctity of the God of Virtues, which the seraphims proclaimed, and shall proclaim for evermore.

The second distinguishing character of the sanctity of God is the irreconcilable aversion he has for moral evil. The opposition there is between light and darkness, between life and death, is incomparably less than that, which subsists between God and sin, as is evinced by the punishment of the rebel Angels, of our first parents, and by the sufferings of Jesus Christ our redeemer. The knowledge God has of his own adorable perfections, inspires him with an infinite hatred against all, that lessens his honour or robs him of the glory due to his holy name. Hence his injured sanctity calls upon his justice to vindicate his honour, by punishing the offence with the utmost rigour.

Thousands of immortal Spirits with Lucifer at their head, shining in their robes of glory more brilliant than the sun, no sooner consented to a thought of consummate pride, than they were driven from the face of God, and fell like lightning into a lake of fire and brimstone, which was that instant made for their everlasting punishment. By the
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the nobility and holiness of their first state, they were upon a level with the other illustrious Princes of heaven, now reigning in glory; but because they dared to trespass against the sovereign Sanctity of the most High, they were in a moment transformed from angels of light into fire-brands of hell. Blasted by the wrath of divine justice they lie engulfed in raging flames, and the smoke of their torments ascends* for ever and ever before the Lord. Tho' made according to the likeness of their great creator, and made for everlasting happiness, they are for ever banished from his divine sight, because being sullied with the guilt of sin, they are void of that spotless robe of sanctity, without which no one can see God.

The heavy punishment that followed the transgression of our first Parents in the terrestrial paradise, is another instance, and a striking instance it is of God's implacable aversion to sin. Adam and Eve by an abuse of their free will having suffered themselves to be seduced into an act of disobedience, and to eat of the forbidden fruit, they that instant forfeited the grace of original righteousness, with which they had been endowed, and so lost their creator's favour. The earth was cursed on their account, and they were driven out of the delightful garden, which had been assigned them for their happy abode. An increasing train of painful miseries accompanied them in their banishment,

till

* Rev. xiv.

till death reduced their bodies to the grave, to mingle again with the common dust, of which they had been first formed. Their title to a supernatural life was also extinguished with their innocence, and the gate of heaven was barred against them and their whole posterity, till full satisfaction should be made for the crime they had committed. Thus the whole human race groaned under the weight of God's displeasure, thus they sat in the shade of death, nor was there any prospect of relief or comfort for them, but in the hope of a promised Redeemer at some future time. The temporal deliverance of a chosen nation from the slavery of Egypt was all, that the religion and miraculous power even of a Moses could effect. Neither the faith of Abraham, nor the piety of David, nor the sighs and prayers of all the Patriarchs united together were sufficient to wipe out the stain of sin, or to atone for the offence which had been committed against a God of infinite sanctity. From the infinite greatness of an offended Deity the offence contracted a degree of infinite guilt, which nothing less than infinite merit could fully expiate, and such merit was not to be found among the sons of men.

The second person therefore of the most blessed Trinity, God the Son, consubstantial and co-eternal with the father and the Holy Ghost, descended the heavens, and undertook by sufferings to repair the injury, which sin had done to the divine sanctity.

tity. But being infinitely above the reach of grief or pain in his divine nature, he deigned to stoop to the condition of man, that he might suffer both. This is the strongest instance we can have of the hatred God bears against sin.

Jesus Christ, the splendour of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance,* was incapable of the least sin; but because he had assumed the form and likeness of a sinner, he was loaded with all the ignominy and sufferings due to sin. For he has truly borne our infirmities, and has carried our sorrows, as the Prophet foretold,† he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, that by his bruises we might be made whole. In obedience to his own decree he received the bitter cup from his Father's hand, and he drank it to the very bottom. In submission to his Father's will he suffered every kind of painful ignominy, and being loaded with a heavy cross he was led forth to the mountain of Calvary, like a meek lamb to be sacrificed.‡ His sacred hands and feet were bored with nails, which fastened him to the cross; the cross was set upright, and exposed him bleeding and naked to the outrages of an insulting multitude. The hatred God bears to sin, never appeared so great as at that awful hour. The eternal Son, now reduced by the malice of his enemies to the agony of death, was even bereft of all interior consolation in his soul, and on account of the debt of sin,

which

* Heb. i. † Isaiah C. liii. ‡ Jer. xi.

which he had taken upon himself, seemed as if he were no longer the object of his Father's love. The bitter grief he felt in his sacred heart, forced from him this tender, this emphatical complaint; My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And under the grief of that mysterious dereliction, he gave up the ghost.*

Great God, how awful are thy judgments, how unsearchable thy decrees! If such be thy aversion, and such thy punishment of sin, who of us will be justified in thy sight? The nearer we come to contemplate thy sanctity, the greater cause of alarm do we discover under the consciousness of our sinful wretchedness, knowing that thou doest not spare the delinquent. O God of Holies, our heart is troubled when we reflect, that every act and circumstance of our life is to be reviewed before the tribunal of thy inviolable Sanctity, and that all our thoughts, words and works are to be weighed in the scale of thy divine justice. These things have I remembered, says the holy king David,† and have poured out all my soul within me. David took the silence of the morning to meditate upon them. Before his thoughts were disturbed by other business of the day, he addicted his early hours to the consideration of a subject, which demanded the attention of his whole mind. In the morning, Lord, I will stand before thee, says he,‡ and I will see. What is it, holy Prophet, that thou

* Mat. xxvii

† Psalm xli.

‡ Psalm v.

thou risest to see in God, which thus excites thy devotion and calls forth all the faculties of thy soul to consider it well? Is it the splendour of his glory, is it the magnificence of his works, or the wonders of his almighty power, that thou hast to consider? These appear at every step in every part of the visible creation. Is it then the rigour of his justice, or the terrors of his wrath against his enemies? These indeed are striking subjects of consideration; but these the pious king had frequently considered, and in a sublime style had written down his inspired sentiments upon them.

Among the attributes of God therefore, there is something else, which to the Prophet's eye appears still more striking, and still more awful, and this is his adorable sanctity. This he rose to meditate upon, this was the subject of his morning and most recollected thoughts. In the morning, says he, I will stand before thee, and will see, that thou art not a God, who willest iniquity. For neither shall the wicked dwell near thee, nor will thy holiness permit the ungodly to abide before thee. This supreme, this inviolable and sovereign holiness of God is what David beheld in spirit, and it is what he knew would present itself to him upon his first entrance into the regions of eternity.

The same important subject which awakened the royal Prophet's attention in so lively a manner, ought also to awaken ours. Death will no sooner close

close our eyes, than a God, to whom the very appearance of sin is infinitely odious, will be presented to our view sitting upon his seat of majesty to receive and judge us. We shall stand and see. We shall see a God, infinitely holy, omnipotent, eternal and immutable; a God no longer smiling with the offer of pardon or waiting for our repentance, but shining in the terrors of impartial justice. In that single, that important moment, which is to decide our eternal lot, we shall see God our judge. But when that moment is once gone, whether we shall see that God again, is a mystery wholly hidden from us. And when will that important moment come? It is not known: perhaps this very night; it may come at any hour; it approaches nearer and nearer every time we breathe.

From this consideration of the divine Sanctity what are we to conclude, and what is the fruit we are to reap? It is to adore and imitate.

To respect, to honour and adore the sovereign holiness of a God infinitely great, is certainly the first duty which nature itself inspires into every man, who knows his beginning and last end. This duty is moreover impressed upon him by the principles of his religion, as well as by the example of all holy men, who are gone before him. This the angels in heaven teach him by the respectful homage, which they pay, and by the joyful canticles, which they

they incessantly sing, to the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. To glorify God and to sanctify his soul by the use of those means, which God himself has ordained for that purpose, is the great and essential duty of a Christian. But how neglectful, how deficient have we been in this point? What have we done to sanctify or to save our souls? How seldom have we thought of God, how little have we known him? Or to what has our knowledge served, but to offend him with greater guilt? Nothing then remains but to repent and change our lives. The tears and sighs of a contrite heart God will not reject.

To conceive a just horror and detestation of sin is, therefore, the second fruit we are to draw from this consideration of the divine Sanctity; and it is what God himself teaches us by the heavy pains, which he has inflicted, as well upon the fallen angels, as upon our sinful parents. Since sin is so odious to Almighty God, and so incompatible with his sanctity, how great ought to be our confusion, how intense our sorrow for having been guilty of it, and how sincere ought to be our purpose not to commit it any more. Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with thy fear,* was the penitential prayer of David; and for a Christian who knows to what dreadful punishments every deliberate transgression in a matter of weight exposes him, how is it possible not to fear lest the allurements of temptation,

and

* Psalm xviii.

and the corruption of his own weak heart, should gain the consent of his will, and betray him into some act of rebellion against the Lord his God?

But the same holy sentiment, which dictates to the soul a wholesome fear and detestation of sin, inspires at the same time a chaste desire and affection for virtue. To love justice and to hate iniquity is in God but one indivisible act, which specifies that supreme, that unbounded, that self-existing sanctity of the divine nature, which shines with the purest beams of everlasting light, and will suffer no unclean spirit to approach or behold its glory. Therefore be ye holy, because I am holy,* is the express precept of Almighty God to his people. St. Peter repeats this precept to us in his first Epistle,† and allgedes the most cogent reasons, why all christians ought to exert their best endeavours to fulfil it. 1st. Because, as children of obedience in the law of grace, they owe this duty to their heavenly Father. 2dly. Because they have been redeemed by the precious blood of the spotless and immaculate Lamb Christ. 3dly. Because by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, their faith and hope in God is confirmed. 4thly. Because they are born anew to a spiritual life, not of corruptible but of incorruptible seed, by the word of the living God, who abideth for ever. Such are the reasons St. Peter gives, why all
Christians

* Lev. xi. † C. i.

Christians ought to aim at sanctity in every thing they do.

The motive, assigned in the sacred text for our being holy, is the most perfect, the most noble, and sublime ; it is, because God himself is holy. It therefore sets no bounds to our endeavours, it confines us not to one only kind of duty, it comprehends the whole compass of our lives, it regards all our words, all our actions; even all our thoughts and desires, or as St. Peter expresses himself, it obliges us to be holy in all our conversation,* to the full extent of our zeal. Whoever is holy, let him become more holy still.† For our sanctification, says St. Paul,‡ is the undoubted will of God, who hath called us unto holiness, and hath given his holy spirit in us.

Wherefore to purify the heart from sin, and from the affection of sin, is a duty which the God of sanctity expects from all men. To sanctify the soul moreover by virtuous habits, and to acquire that degree of holiness, which forms the christian character, is a professed duty, which he exacts from those, whom he has in a special manner blest and enlightened with the gift of faith. For since Jesus Christ our Saviour God has given himself for us, says St. Paul,† that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify unto himself a people, who should be acceptable to him, and who should adorn

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* 1st Ep. St. Peter, C. 1. § Rev. xxii. † 1st Thes. iv.

† Tit. ii.

his doctrine with their purity of manners in every point, a constant integrity of conduct, and a certain holiness of life is now the duty of every Christian.

There should be holiness in our words, so that nothing unbecoming ever fall from our lips; nothing, that we should be afraid or ashamed of uttering before God, at the very foot of his throne. Holiness in our thoughts, so that we let not our fancy dwell with delight upon any forbidden object, or entertain itself with any thing, that can offend the eye of all-perfect Sanctity. Holiness in our affections, so that whether we eat, or whether we drink, or whatever else we do, we may by the purity of our intention, do all to the glory of God.* Holiness in our actions, so that by our good example we may be a shining light† for men to glorify our Father, who is in Heaven. Holiness in fine in all our conduct, so that by no deliberate malice or notorious guilt we ever sully the purity of our souls, but always strive to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Be ye holy, God says to all men. Therefore to be holy in some degree is a most certain obligation incumbent upon all Christians, and not to aim at it is to give up their title to heaven. To be holy moreover in a greater degree, is an obligation equally pressing with respect to many individuals.

1st.

1st. With respect to those, who have been blessed with a more plenteous share of heavenly graces; for of him who has received much, much will be exacted in return.* 2dly. With respect to those, who have been greater sinners: for the more guilty they have been, the greater is the reparation they have to make. Great sins require great virtues for their atonement. 3dly. With respect to those, whom God by his special graces calls to a more eminent degree of virtue and Christian perfection. For some chosen souls there are, who are enriched with spiritual gifts far above the portion of common mortals, and those gifts it is their duty to improve by improving in virtue. Whether it be one, two, five, or ten talents they receive, the parable† in the Gospel leaves no room to doubt, but they are bound to increase them under pain of incurring the displeasure of their God. By the holy sentiments he inspires, by the heavenly lights he communicates, and by the sweet attractives of his grace, which he diffuses in their hearts, it is evident, that he expects more than an ordinary service from them, and that he will be satisfied with nothing less than sanctity in a superior degree. Thrice happy, if they enter into these gracious designs, and faithfully correspond with these special favours of Almighty God.

But, O God, how supine has been our negligence in this point? How little have we profited by

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* Luke xii. † Mat. xxv.

the graces thou hast given us? And with the sanctity of our Christian profession how inconsistent has been the system of our lives? For little has been our concern to know thy sanctity, and still less has been our study to honour it by our virtues. Penetrated with the most profound sentiments of our own nothingness, we acknowledge, O God, our past criminal neglect, and humbly ask forgiveness at the foot of thy throne. A sincere desire joined with a studious endeavour for the future to sanctify our souls according to the pattern thou hast shewn us, shall be the chief, and as far as in us lies, the daily occupation of our lives.

DISCOURSE VI.

UPON THE POWER OF GOD.

I am the all-powerful God. Genesis, c. xvii. v. 1.

WHEN God appeared to Abraham, and promised to make him the father of an innumerable offspring at a time when there was not the least human probability of any such event, he roused his faith by telling him, that he was the omnipotent God; the God, who of himself is able to effect whatever he pleases on earth as well as in heaven. For he is the Lord God of all living creatures. Nothing is hard to him says the Prophet Jeremiah.* He is the most strong, the great, the powerful, Lord of Hosts is his name. He alone has the principle of immortality from himself, he dwells in the midst of inaccessible light.† He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; the lives of mortals are at his disposal, he shortens or prolongs their days at discretion: he holds the whole creation in his hand; with a finger he turns the globe of the universe upon its hinges, and by his mighty arm, which reaches from end to end, he rules and directs all things with wisdom, fortitude, and justice.

Power

* C. xxxii. † 1 Tim. vi.

Power therefore is an attribute not less glorious, than essential to the divinity. Whatever power we discover besides, is no more than a small emanation of that, which with plenitude resides essentially in God. Power in some sort is the most shining attribute of God, because by the wonders it has wrought, his greatness is manifested in a manner the most striking to our senses. To instance this we have but to cast an eye upon the visible creation, which must necessarily give us an idea the most sublime of the power that has made it. The power can be nothing less than infinite, nothing less than that of the most high God, who alone can make things out of nothing, who alone can lay his commands upon things that do not exist, and who as effectually can enforce obedience from them, as tho' they had had an existence before he spoke.

From the deep and empty abyss, in which no real being had been yet formed, the Almighty bade this wonderful creation rise. In obedience to his command it rose with all the beauty, variety, and harmony of parts, that shine with such magnificence throughout the whole. Great God, thou hast put on praise and beauty, exclaims the Prophet,* thou art clothed with light as with a garment, thou hast stretched out the heavens like a vast pavilion, thou hast made the clouds thy chariot, thou walkest upon the wings of the winds.

Thou

Thou hast founded the earth upon its own basis; the deep like a garment is its clothing. The mountains here ascend, there the vallies sink down between the hills, and receive the plenteous streams, which thou hast commanded to flow for their refreshment.

The bulky size of the globe, that we inhabit, may to short-sighted mortals seem something great: its extensive tracts of country have furnished subject of contention to ambitious warriors, who commonly measure their ideas of worldly power by the extent of territory they are masters of. But, when compared with the whole circumference of the earth, how narrow and how circumscribed is the territory of the most extended empire that ever flourished? To its most partial admirer the Roman empire itself seemed to be no more than a little speck upon the wide surface of the earth. In this comparative point of view how small does even the earth appear, when we look up and consider those brighter orbs, that adorn the canopy of heaven? Their magnitude, their number, their distances, and motion indicate a power, that is infinite in Him, who formed them. Behold the numerous host of stars and planets, some rolling on with incredible velocity thro' the vast expanse, others seemingly fixed in the firmament of heaven, all shining with peculiar brightness, and each one forming within itself a separate and distinct world more extensive and more perfect than

than the globe that we inhabit. Behold the immense frame of the universe, poised by its own weight without any other prop or support than the hand of God, who first made, who still moves and preserves it.

The production of the earth, sun, moon and stars, out of nothing, is the wonderful work of God. And what did it cost him? It cost him but a single word. For he spoke says the Psalmist,* and they were made, he commanded and they were created. The earth, the sea, the light, the heavens, and all the ornaments thereof, were not; he spoke, and behold they were. In an instant, at his word, at the first intimation of his will, all things emerged out of nothing into actual existence. For to will and to act, to design and execute, to command and to be obeyed, is but one and the self-same thing with God, whenever he is pleased to exert his absolute authority: and thus it was, that without the aid of any other power, without the least violence or any trouble to himself, he called instantaneously into being the vast variety of creatures, that we see, the wonderful works of nature, the grand and marvellous system of the world, which we so much admire and yet so imperfectly understand.

Now as God by his sovereign power has made one world out of nothing, so he can make another.

But

But why do I say another? He can, if he pleases, make millions of worlds more extensive, more perfect, and more noble than the present. Nor by such an act, would his creative power be expended or yet diminished. For the same reason he has the power, if he chuses to exert it, to annihilate the things that are, and in an instant to wipe out every mark of their present existence, as tho' they had never been.

The rich, the great and pompous potentates of the earth, glory in the sway they hold among their fellow mortals. They are stiled high and mighty in the language of men, they perhaps fancy themselves such in their own conceits. But what is their power, and what is their greatness, if balanced with the power, which God has displayed in the creation? Placed by birth or by fortune upon a throne, they please themselves with the idea of the consequence it gives them. They plan stately palaces, they erect costly buildings for their use or for show, they levy mighty armies, and let fly the royal standard of authority. If in the field they are fortunate enough to found or extend an empire, the world flatters and admires; it presents them with the incense of applause, and idolizes them as demigods of the earth. To men, who judge merely of an object as it strikes their senses, this pageantry of power may seem real greatness. But in fact what is it? A specious varnish, or, to speak more properly, the glittering mark of their own self-insufficiency,

sufficiency. For to carry their plans into execution, they are under the necessity of employing other hands, and to complete their projects of ambition they stand in need of a borrowed force, without which they can do nothing. If their schemes are therefore crowned with a success, which redounds either to their honour or their profit, it is chiefly to the exertions of their subjects, to the valour of their soldiers, and the conduct of their commanders, that they are indebted for it.

The Almighty stands in need of no such assistance. Whatever he does, he does by the strength of his own arm: for the execution of his designs he wants no help, no succour, nor subsidies from creatures. From himself and within himself he has a power equal to the extent of his decrees. The laws of nature are under his control: he alone directs their force, and in the course of events he either preserves or suspends their influence, as is suitable to the designs of his Providence, whether it be to protect his friends or to chastise his enemies.

In his heart the sinner said,* I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, and be like the most High. But what ensued? The Lord of Hosts did but rise up, and without struggle hurled him in an instant down to hell, even into the depth of the burning lake.

For

* Isaiah xiv.

For the Lord is great in power, as the Prophet Nahum† describes him in a language the most striking and sublime. The ways of the Lord, says he, are in a tempest and whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He drains the rivers as he pleases, and turns their beds into a dry and barren desert, he rebukes the sea and dries up the waters thereof. The hills and lonesome mountains shake under him, the flower of Libanon fades away, the beauty of Basan and Carmel perish: the earth, the world and all, who dwell therein, tremble in his presence. Before the face of his anger who shall stand? His anger is poured out like fire, and the rocks melt away before it. Warlike heroes, kings, and conquerors, in their height of glory, sink down with the trembling multitude before the omnipotent Lord of Hosts. A Nabuchodonosor, or a Pharaoh, opposed to God, is but as grass before the scythe of the husbandman, which the first stroke levels to the ground without noise, without labour, and without cost. For behold he shall tread them down like the mire of the streets, says Isaiah,* he shall break the earthen vessel with terror; the tall of stature he shall cut down and the lofty he shall humble

Lift up your minds, my Brethren, and in thought behold the omnipotent and eternal God sitting upon his throne of glory, arrayed with all the splendour of infinite Majesty, and stretching forth

forth his hand with absolute sway over the whole creation. Behold him in the actual exercise of an authority, which is unlimited in its power, universal in its extent, irresistible in its decrees, and ineffable in its effects. The power he displays, is inherent in his very nature ; it is supreme and infinite. It is a power, which gives him a sovereign right to order and to forbid whatever he pleases, to distribute punishments and rewards to men, according to their deserts, to cite even kings and emperors before his tribunal, to judge and to dispose of them finally without appeal for eternity. Where are they, said the Prophet Baruch,* where are those kings of the nations, who ruled over the earth, who gloried in their treasures, and wantonly sported with the lives of their fellow creatures ? They have quickly disappeared, they are swept from the land of the living, and others have risen up in their stead. Where are those heroes of antiquity, once renowned for their skill and feats of war ? They dwelt upon the earth, they partook of the common light for a time ; but the way of wisdom they were strangers to, They therefore perished in their folly, they are gone down to the shades of death, they lie undistinguished with the rest of men, they are mouldered into dust, trodden under foot, and forgot.

The utmost extension therefore, that human power can partake of, is but short ; it is shut up
within

within the narrow bounds of life. After the period of a few days, the Princes of the earth sink into the grave upon a level with their former subjects, stript of their prerogative and of all their boasted consequence. I saw the sinner in his exalted station, says the royal Prophet,* I saw him highly elated, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanon. I did but pass by, and he was no more. I looked round in search of him, but he was not to be found : even the place where he stood was not to be seen, nor could so much as a single mark be traced of his late existence. So impotent is the pride of man, that there needs but a single look from God, to level it with the dust.

The Almighty stood and measured the earth, says Habacuc,‡ he looked and dissolved the nations. For strength and power are in his hands. He touched the trembling hills and they were instantly wrapt in smoke ; the ancient mountains burst in pieces, the rocks melted away like wax, the earth shook to its very centre, and the pillars of heaven were forced from their foundations. I heard, says St. John in his revelations,† I heard as it were an universal voice, and it was the voice of every living creature, which exists in heaven, and upon the earth and in the sea. I heard them all crying out with one accord, Benediction, and Honour, and Glory, and Power to Him, who sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever. For great and
wonderful

* Psalm xxxvi.

‡ C. iii.

† C. v.

wonderful are thy works, † Lord God omnipotent ; just and true are thy ways, O king of ages. Who shall not fear thee, Lord, and magnify thy name ?

Shall feeble man then dare to glory in his fancied might ? Or shall sinful man presume, that he may with impunity transgress the commands of God, who suffers not the least deviation from the laws he has established, even in his inanimate creatures. To the sea he has said, † Hitherto thou shalt come and shalt go no further. The sea respects the divine mandate, and there it breaks its swelling waves. The boisterous element no sooner hears his powerful rebuke, * than the storm subsides, and all is hushed into a peaceful calm. He has commanded the light to go forth, ‖ and it goes ; he has called and it obeys with trembling. The stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced ; they were called and they said, *Here we are*, and with cheerfulness they shined forth to him, who made them. For he is our God, they cry, and there is no other, who shall compare with him. How noble is this language of the inspired writers, and how expressive of the power, which characterises an omnipotent God.

When with a strong hand God led forth his people from the barbarous land of Egypt, the sea saw and fled. The sun and moon stood still to give them victory. Jordan divided its waters and
turned

† John C. xv.

† Job. xxxviii.

* Mat. viii.

‖ Bar. C. iii.

turned back its course. At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob. Such wonders justly raise our admiration, and fill our hearts with an awful respect for the power, that wrought them. Every day and every hour, furnish us with instances of the same power, which appear equally great and wonderful to those, who duly consider them. They perhaps excite our admiration less, because more familiar to our senses; but they are not less wonderful in themselves, or less expressive of the divine power.

What is it but the active power of God, which in the order of nature preserves and continues on the same motion, the same beauty, the same subordination and harmony, that he first established in the visible parts of the creation? This is the power, that directs the course of the heavens, that presides over the rising and setting of the sun, that regulates the times and seasons of the year, that sends forth timely rains and warmth to quicken the earth in its various productions for the support and comfort of human life. This is the power, which in the order of civil society forms the tie of nations, which gives to empires their stability, to kings their authority, and to laws the force of binding the consciences of men. This in fine is the power, which in the order of grace appears still more excellent, because accompanied with mysteries the most sacred and sublime, which
without

without a special revelation we never could have known.

God the son, consubstantial and co-eternal with the father in one and the same nature, has descended from heaven for our salvation. God is become man* by uniting the divine and human nature together in one person. A God of infinite power has therefore put on weakness for our sake. A God of infinite sanctity has assumed the form of a sinner, that he might be capable of suffering, and by suffering restore to us the title of inheritance, which had been forfeited by the sin of our first parents. The formation of the heavens had been but the work of his fingers,§ but in the work of our redemption he has exerted the might of his arm.† For by this he has broken down the gates of hell and overturned the empire of Satan. Upon the ruins of idolatry he has founded to himself an everlasting kingdom. By the doctrine, death and merits of Jesus Christ our Redeemer he has formed to himself a holy and acceptable people in the establishment of a religion equally sublime in its articles of belief, as it is holy in its principles of morality.

This is the religion, which in its beginning was to the Jews a scandal, and to the Gentiles seemed no better than mere folly, but which in the course of a few years was warmly cherished and embraced by Jew and Gentile. In vain did persecutors whet
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* John C. i § Psalm viii. † Luke C. i.

the sword for its destruction; in vain did tyrants strive by penal threats and statutes to prevent its growth. Without any other power to support it than that of its own divine author, and with all the powers of human eloquence and the prejudice of passions to oppose it, the Christian religion soon spread thro' the universe. Small as a grain of mustard, which in its seed is the least of plants, it first diffused its branches from the banks of Jordan to the sea, and from the sea even to the extremities of the earth. In every corner of the globe it has set up the triumphant standard of the cross; and notwithstanding the ridicule, which a mistaken zeal or a licentious incredulity has constantly endeavoured to cast upon it, we behold it still continuing, as it first began, to triumph in the purity of its doctrine, in the virtues of its followers, in the union and subordination of its members. How glorious, how eminent does the power of God here appear? it is the power he promised* to exert for the maintenance of his Church, against which no devices of men and no efforts of Satan ever shall prevail.

Great God, what tongue can express, or what heart conceive the power thou art possessed of? Shall ungrateful man, instead of adoring, dispute the wonders thou hast wrought? Shall presumptuous man pretend to restrain thy operations, or to deny thy revealed mysteries, because he does

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* Mat. xvi.

not understand them? Thou wouldst not be infinite, thou wouldst not be divine, if thou couldst do no more, than human reason can account for. Unless we renounce our reason, my Brethren, we must necessarily grant, that God in his omnipotence can do infinitely more, than we in our weakness can possibly comprehend. To pronounce peremptorily upon a point, which is manifestly above the reach of our comprehension, and to say it cannot be, denotes not the act of a prudent nor yet of a very wise man. Not only vain, but wicked must be the man, who being equally ignorant of himself and God, shall presume to measure the extent of divine power by the narrow limits of his own understanding. But there is a knowledge, which God has hidden from the wise in their own conceits, and revealed only to his little ones.*

We therefore depend on God not only in the things we see, but likewise in the things he proposes to our belief; nor can we rationally doubt of, much less can we deny the truths he has spoken to us. For to him nothing is impossible.† In the order either of grace or of nature there is nothing, which we have not received and actually hold from him. By him we have been created, by him we are still preserved, and by him we have been redeemed from the jaws of hell. As our creator he has drawn us out of nothing, where we had lain for eternity, and where we should still lie for an eternity to come, without the possibility

* Mat xi † Luke i

possibility of ever knowing, of ever seeing, or of ever enjoying him. As our Preserver he continues to us the existence, which he once gave. For we should immediately sink into our original nothingness without the support of that saving hand, which first formed us. As our Redeemer he has paid the ransom of our souls; by his death upon a cross he has rescued us from the slavery of sin, and restored to us the happy liberty we had lost, of securing our election to a crown of immortal glory.

Hence the dominion, which God holds over us is universal and supreme. At all times, in all places, in every circumstance of life, even in the things we believe and hope for, our whole and sole dependence is on God. The beginning and the end of our existence here, our exaltation and our fall, our life and death, our present and our future state are at his disposal. For we are but as weak and brittle vessels formed by the potter's hand, which he may preserve or break when he pleases. Death breaks the bond of our dependence upon men, but it puts us into the state of a more immediate and more absolute dependence upon God. For the privilege of free will shall then cease; when life is gone, we shall no longer have the power of acting, or of chusing for ourselves. By the definitive and irrevocable sentence, which he shall then pronounce, his dominion over us will

take a fresh date, which no succession of ages and no end of time shall ever alter.

His dominion over nations and empires is not less absolute and supreme. By the quick revolution of events, which his powerful hand directs, the face of the earth is always changing. Fresh generations rise and fall at his command. The strength of nations sinks down, and the once most flourishing kingdoms disappear. Babylon and Nineve, the boast of ancient times, are no more, the very fragments of their glory are dispersed, nor can the spot, where they formerly stood, be even ascertained. For behold the sovereign disposer of all things sitteth, says Isaiah,* above the vast circle of the earth, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, who with three fingers hath poised the bulky globe, and weighed the heavens with his palm.

A God, invested with such marks of almighty power, equally commands our respect and confidence.

1st. He commands our confidence: because he has not only the power, but the will also to help and to save us, if we are only disposed to cooperate with him in the work of our salvation. For he is our Father, he is a loving and a tender Father to those, who love him. Should I walk in the
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the midst of the shades of death, says the royal Prophet, § I should fear no harm, because the Lord is with me. Tho' a whole host of foes should rise up and make war against me, my heart will not fear. † For from whom shall I fear, while the Lord is my salvation, or of whom shall I be afraid, while he protects my life? His bounteous eye is always turned upon those, who trust in him, and his ears are ever open to their prayers. Out of the many troubles, that afflict them, he will deliver his faithful servants in due season, he will rescue them out of the hands of their most deadly enemies, and if in the conflict any temporal calamities befall them, he will reward their fidelity with such munificence, as bears no proportion with the short sufferings they undergo. Thus has he supported his Confessors and Virgins in their struggles for virtue; thus has he strengthened his Martyrs, and granted them victory over death itself; thus in fine for the reward of our services has he prepared in heaven such treasures, such a magnificence of glory, as none but the blessed themselves can conceive.

2dly. The power of God commands our respect. It is natural to respect and fear those, on whom we depend. We are always in the hands of God: he is our sovereign Lord both for time and eternity. If he is great in his rewards of virtue, he is no less terrible in his punishments of vice. Whenever the malice

lice of sinners calls down his vengeance on them, it overwhelms, it crushes them with its weight. Wherefore I say to you, my friends, says our blessed Saviour,* be not terrified at those, who can do you no more than a passing injury. They may indeed destroy the body, but your soul they cannot hurt. But I will show you, whom you are to fear: fear him, who after death can cast both body and soul into hell, if you die in his disgrace. Yes, I say, fear him.

3dly. It is our duty to respect the power of God even in his substitutes. For the maintenance of due subordination and union, without which no human society can subsist, God has appointed his ministers and delegates on earth, who from him have received a power to govern, to instruct and direct us in our duty. To them therefore, on account of the rank they hold, is respect and obedience strictly due. This all sovereigns have a right to from their subjects, all pastors from their flock, all parents from their children, and all masters from their servants. The honour paid to them, is paid to God himself; for they hold his place, they are his representatives and vicegerents in the external government of his people. Therefore whoever resists those, who are in power, resists the ordinance of God himself, as St. Paul tells the Romans.*

4thly.

* Luke xii.

* 2. xiii.

4thly. The power of God is to be respected even by those, who are invested with a portion of it. For the power they have received, is no other than a delegated and subordinate power, which God has imparted to them for his own glory and the good of mankind; it is a temporary power which they must soon resign into the hands of Him, who gave it: it is a limited power, which as Christians and servants of the most high God, they are obliged to use with moderation, justice and discretion, for such purposes, as right order and reason call for, and not as pride and fancy shall direct. The preservation of union and peace amongst men, the suppression of vice, the encouragement of virtue, the support of the weak, and the relief of the indigent are objects, which no persons in power should ever lose sight of. Men of authority never should forget, that they also have a Master in heaven, to whom they are accountable for the very power they now enjoy. For power says the sacred text,* has been given them by the Lord, and strength by the most High, who will examine their works, who will search their thoughts, and pass judgment on them. For God will not except any man's person, neither will he stand in awe of any man's greatness, for he made the little and the great.

O God, thou alone art great, thou alone art the Lord of Heaven and of earth. Within the compass of thy unbounded domain all things are placed,
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* Wisdom. C. vi.

all creatures are subject to thy control, and there is none, that can resist the force of thy decrees: thou rulest all with sovereign wisdom, goodness, and justice, nor has any one a right to question the equity of thy proceedings. By thy power this vast universe first began, and soon as the course of ages, which thou hast fixt shall be complete, by thy power it will also end. Then shall every mark of worldly grandeur be blotted out; then shall the world itself and all we covet in it, finally pass away. But thou, great God, shalt reign omnipotent with thy Elect in glory, and thy reign shall last for evermore.

O reflect, ye deluded followers of a faithless world, reflect what it is to let go the eternal inheritance of another life for the fleeting vanities of this. What weakness is it to spend yourselves in catching at an empty shadow, which has the power only to excite, not to satiate your desires? And what blindness is it for the glimmering prospect of some temporal felicity to give up the pursuit of that which is eternal? The least of the Blessed in heaven is possessed of joys, which all the joys of this world put together cannot equal; he is possessed of a happiness, which shall last, he is crowned with glory, that shall shine, when every glimpse of worldly glory shall be lost in everlasting night. Be it then, my Brethren, your sole ambition to be great in heaven: it is the only ambition worthy of an immortal soul.

O God,

O God, we humbly bow down before thee: we adore thy sovereign power: we own our dependence on thee. Dispose of us as thou pleasest. We are wholly thine; there is nothing we possess, but what belongs to thee. All the blessings of life, the senses and faculties of soul and body are thy gracious gifts. O grant, we may make no other use of them, than is conducive to thy honour and our own salvation! To be fervent and steady in our duty to thee, is the grace we humbly beg. We beg for nothing but what thou canst easily grant, nothing but what thou art inclined to grant: for thy goodness is equal to thy power. Thine is the goodness and thine is the power, which has given sight to the blind, health to the sick, and life to the deceased. Thy arm is not shortened nor is thy mercy lessened. Wherefore enlighten us with the knowledge of thy adorable perfections, heal us by thy grace, and raise us from the grave of sin by the quickening gift of zeal in thy holy service. For unless we join our own endeavours to the succours thou givest, imperfect yet will be the work of our salvation. Grant us then, O God the special grace of co-operation, without which thy other gifts will be of no avail.

DISCOURSE VII.

UPON THE KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM OF GOD.

O the Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God. Rom. c. xi. v. 33.

THE knowledge and wisdom, which God displays in all his works, appeared so sublime and wonderful to St. Paul, that he seems to be at a loss for words, how to convey to us the idea he had of their supreme excellence. He had been rapt to the third heaven,* he had there learnt such secrets, as no human tongue can explain: he had seen the vast, unbounded essence of the Divinity laid open like a deep and rich mine before him. Fixed in amazement, and unable to repress the glowing emotions of his soul, he with emphasis exclaims, O the depth, O the fathomless and inexhaustible depth of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which an all-perfect God encloses within his bosom!

The Knowledge of God is a pure and self-existing light, by which he knows, sees, and enlightens all things. By this he sees thro' the very
essence

* 2 Cor. C. xii.

essence of the heavenly Spirits, by this he discerns the most hidden secrets of the human heart. Nor is there any creature invisible in his sight, says St. Paul,* but all things are open and exposed to his all-penetrating eye. In the brightness of his own divine essence he beholds, as in a resplendent mirror, all things clearly and distinctly. Without division, without confusion, without any multiplicity or succession of ideas, he surveys the vast and unlimited variety of objects, that his omnipotence can at any time create, together with every individual circumstance, that can possibly attend and vary the mode of their existence. For by one comprehensive act of his divine mind he reaches thro' the whole extent of times and places, and intuitively beholds at once all the Beings, that ever were or that ever can be beheld or known. His ever-watchful eye darts thro' the boundless compass of eternity. It stretches beyond the highest heavens, it pierces into the deep abyss, and equally discerns whatever passes in the thickest darkness, as in the clearest light.

To God therefore nothing is unknown, from him nothing can be concealed, nothing hidden. Every event that happens throughout the universe, every minute change, that time and nature daily work in the different parts of the creation, every affection and desire, that rises in the heart of man, the secret plans and schemes of the most discontinuous

* Heb. iv.

guous nations, the designs and actions of the whole human race, that have been and shall be from the beginning to the end of time, are all at once present to the divine mind: neither is there any thing however great, or however little in heaven, or on earth, or in the deepest recesses under the earth, which falls not under his immediate knowledge. For being immense, he is every where present; being omniscient nothing can escape his notice, and being omnipotent, nothing can obstruct his sight. Sinners may dissemble, they may assume the smiles of innocence, and deceive mankind; but they shall be never able to deceive a God, who beholds their heart, and scrutinizes the hidden secrets of their conscience. For he is always near, he always hears, and always sees them: he is at once the witness and the judge of all they do. The Lord hath looked from heaven, says the Psalmist,* he hath beheld all the sons of men: from his habitation, which he hath prepared, he hath looked down upon all, who dwell upon the earth. He hath made the heart of every one of them, and understandeth all their works,

The Knowledge of God is therefore infinite, because in one unlimited point of view he knows all, that can possibly be known. The wisdom of God is also infinite for the same reason; because by one comprehensive act of his understanding he fathoms all, that can possibly exist. This divine
Wisdom,

* Psalm xxxiii.

Wisdom, which ever way we consider it, whether absolutely in itself, or relatively to us, is equally admirable, equally adorable, because equally vested with every quality, that challenges our homage. It is infinitely sublime in its ideas; for it comprehends the whole infinite extent of the divine perfections: it is infinitely holy in its ordinances; for it ordains all to the greater glory of God: it is infinitely enlightened in its operations; for it enlightens every man that cometh into the world: it is infinitely benevolent in its desires; for it desires, that all men may be saved: it is infinitely amiable in its dispositions: for it intends and sweetly disposes all things for our final happiness: it is inexhaustible in its resources; for innumerable are the means, which it has in store for the attainment of its ends: it is impenetrable in its counsels which we are commanded to revere: it is adorable in its decrees, which no human understanding can presume to fathom: it is in fine consolatory in the very chastisements it sends us; for it thereby opens our minds to the eternal truths, and prepares our souls for those unspeakable comforts, which are reserved for our reward in heaven.

Holy Job,† who was inspired with an eagerness to know the nature of divine Wisdom, employed every power of his soul, and tried every mode of reasoning to find it out. For this purpose he dived into the deep recesses of the earth
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† Job, C. xxviii.

and sea, and with the keenest penetration examined into all, that was great and wonderful in nature. In the structure and harmony of the universe he discovered marks of a most consummate Wisdom, but he found not Wisdom itself. He then strove to form some notion of its value by comparing it with the most precious metals, with the richest gems and most costly dyes of India. Of these, by comparing their qualities one with the other, he was enabled to estimate the worth; but of the worth of Wisdom he could not yet form the smallest notion. For silver, and gold, and precious stones, the sardonyx, the topaz, and the sapphire, he found to be as dirt, or as a grain of sand † with respect to Wisdom.

Where then is this divine wisdom to be found, continues Job, and in what part of the globe does it lie concealed? Wearied as it were in the fruitless search, he at last addresses himself to the different parts of the creation, as they occur to his mind and asks them separately, where is the seat of Wisdom? The deep abyss replies, it is not here, and the sea declares aloud, it is not with me. Wisdom is hidden from the eyes of mortal men, nor is it to be met with in the land of those, who live in delights.

Destruction and death cry out, we once were told,
 and with our ears we have heard the fame thereof,
 but

but now it is far removed, it is withdrawn for ever from our sight. The value therefore and the ways of Wisdom are known only to God, concludes the holy man, because only God is acquainted with its secrets. God alone can comprehend the place of its abode. God stretches his all-seeing eye from one extremity of the world to the other, comprises in a point the whole circumference of heaven, and within the bosom of his own unconfined immensity beholds the divine seat, where Wisdom for ever dwells.

Yes, from the beginning, and before the world was I created, says Wisdom itself,* and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be, and in the holy dwelling-place I have ministered before him. I sprung from the mouth of the most High, the first-born before all creatures. Before any thing was yet made,† I had an existence, and my existence is from eternity. The depths were not yet formed, and I was already conceived. The Almighty had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers nor the poles of the earth. The mountains with their ponderous bulk had not as yet been established, neither had the fountains of waters begun to flow. Before the hills I was brought forth. I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven,‡ and have penetrated into the bottom of the deep, and have walked in the waves of the sea, and have stood in all the earth. For I was present,§ when he

* Eccl. C. xxiv. † Prov. C. viii. ‡ Eccl. C. xxiv. § Prov. C. viii.

he prepared the heavens ; when he framed the universe, and disposed the parts thereof in that wonderful and beautiful order, in which they now appear. I was with him playing in all his works, and was delighted with the harmonious system he was forming. When he balanced the foundations of the earth, when he compassed the sea with its bounds that it might not trespass upon the dry land, when he poised the shining orbs of the firmament upon their own bases, when he expanded the sky above, and measured out the different seasons of the year, I assisted at his counsels, and directed his all-creative power.

Therefore blessed are they, who keep my ways, and observe my precepts ; for it is my delight to dwell with the children of men. It is by me, that kings and princes rule. With me is honour and glory and riches, better than gold and the precious stone : for mine are the treasures of prudence, of equity, of fortitude and justice, that I may enrich those, who love me. Wherefore blessed is the man, who watches daily at my gate to find me, and waits at my door to hear my instructions. For he, who finds me, shall find life and receive salvation from the Lord. Such is the portrait, which divine Wisdom has drawn of herself in the inspired writings. Such is the sublime excellence of the virtues she possesses, and such are the virtues she desires to impart to the sons of men.

But

But the sons of men seldom seem disposed to cooperate with the views of their creator. Amidst the noise and hurry of a busy world they give themselves but little time to know his will. Instead of listening to the lessons, or of adopting the principles of his divine wisdom, they too commonly adopt quite other principles, and to their misfortune follow a profane and worldly wisdom of their own: a false wisdom, full of artifice and deceit; an intriguing wisdom, inspired by self-love, guided by human respects, and swayed by sordid interest; a political wisdom, which teaches its followers to be fine adepts in the arts of dissimulation and hypocrisy; a wisdom in fine, which makes them knowing and alert in every pursuit, but that of their last end.

Hence the science of salvation is but little cultivated in the world, and still less encouraged. Hence notwithstanding the boast of an enlightened age, Christians appear in a manner ignorant or wholly careless of the only knowledge that can make them happy, the knowledge of religion. Habituated to hear and see little else, than what flatters either their senses or their passions, they turn their thoughts to the study of those things only, which may make them pleasing and accomplished in the world. Instead of useful and instructive reading, they stock their minds with the loose romantic notions, which the circulating light compositions of the age present them with. Here from their earliest youth they become ac-

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quainted with such real or fictitious transactions, as only serve to fire the imagination, to excite their passions, to make them fond of themselves, fond of flattery, fond of finery, fond of an idle and dissipated life. Strangers to the sober and frugal virtues, that adorn the walks of domestic happiness, they range at large thro' the fields of worldly delights, they hurry from place to place, from one amusement to another, without enjoying any, they weary themselves in the ways of vanity, they lose themselves in the labyrinth of expence, and forget they are Christians. The desire of pleasing or the fear of displeasing, the art of knowing how to suit the inclinations of men, and to humour the extravagant fashions of the times, constitute in a great measure the wisdom of the world: and as it is a fashionable wisdom extremely flattering to flesh and blood, no wonder it prevails, in almost every rank and condition of mankind.

Guided by this false wisdom, the father of a family is careful to fashion his son be-times according to the maxims of the world. He inspires him with the spirit of the world, he initiates him in the principles of the world, he forms him to the practices of the world, without distinguishing the right from the wrong, and provided he can only make him figure with his equals in the manners of the world, he cares not how little he shows of the manners of a Christian.

Inspired with this false wisdom, a worldly-minded mother applies herself to the training up of her daughter in all those polished modes of education, which are more adapted to make her pleasing in the eyes of men, than in the eyes of her Creator. Too fine herself to be acquainted with the homely virtues of retirement, of piety, of prayer, and regularity in her family, she as little thinks of teaching them by word of mouth, as she is far from recommending them by example. She then produces the darling object of her care into life, she decks her out with excess of finery, and sets her up as the idol of pride and self-complacency to court and receive the incense of her flattering admirers.

Animated with this false wisdom, the ambitious man in order to gratify his desires studies every art, and adopts every measure, that he thinks conducive to his ends: and tho' the supplanting of a friend, the forfeiture of his word or the renouncing of his principle may be required of him to gain the object he has in view, he will wickedly pride himself upon his superior prudence for having taken the only step, that could effectually promote his designs.

Blinded by this false wisdom, the avaricious man directs his whole attention to the accumulation of worldly wealth. With this view he watches every

opportunity, and puts in practice whatever means seem the best suited to his purpose, without so much as reflecting, whether those means are lawful or not, whether they are conformable or repugnant to the first duties of a Christian. It is enough for him, that they furnish an increase to his former store: and tho' in the eagerness of his pursuits he should at times descend to such practices, as must vilify him in the opinion of every honest man, he will notwithstanding that criminally exult in private for the success he has had, and consider it as the crown of his judicious industry.

Such false, such earthly, and such carnal wisdom, tho' countenanced by such numbers as it is, cannot fail of being most hateful to God; being set up in direct opposition to his divine wisdom, it provokes his severest anger. For the wisdom of the wise I will destroy says he,* and the understanding of the prudent I will reject. Nor is the wisdom of God less conspicuous than his anger in the very punishments he inflicts. For in chastising the follies of men he oftentimes employs no other means to overthrow their wicked projects, than what they themselves had chosen to establish their success. The youth for instance, on whom no pains and no expence had been spared for his advancement in the world, far from seconding the worldly views of his parents, turns out by the just dispositions of a wise God the very reverse of what they

they expected, and instead of honour brings disgrace upon his family.

The ambitious man is often suffered to rise to the highest pinnacle of honour, that by his disgrace the chastisement of his pride may be the more striking. Thus the avaricious man, who had fancied he should be happy in his heaps of wealth, finds them in the end to be only heaps of discontent, either gnawing his heart with bitter trouble, or tormenting his mind with an insatiable desire of getting more. So true it is, that every pretension to wisdom, which has not duty for its principle, is mere folly: its beginnings may perchance yield some glimmering rays of hope to inconsiderate men, but its end is sure to conclude in disappointment and regret. For the Lord in his wrath hath spoken,* I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will bring to nought the understanding of the prudent. The world itself daily experiences and fulfils the truth of this heavy threat in the confusion and disgrace, which an all-wise God directs it to heap upon its devoted followers.

But notwithstanding these visible strokes, by which God is daily pleased to confound the wisdom of the world, nothing is so common, as to see Christians sacrificing their days, their conscience, and their reason to its pernicious maxims. Flattered by the smooth and delusive language of
a refined

* Isaiah C. xxix.

a refined Philosophy, they let themselves be easily persuaded, that a familiarity with the world is not so dangerous, as is usually represented from the pulpit, and that as long as their heart is good, the essentials of virtue will not suffer. Under this deceitful notion many unwary Christians have rushed into the midst of temptations, formed dangerous connexions, and at last engaged in a habit of sin, without perceiving the gulf into which they fell. For they fell not all at once, as no one comes to the height of immorality on a sudden. Restrained by principle, or by the early habits of a good education, they at first kept their ground: but as they advanced by degrees, and became more acquainted with the world, those early habits began to wear off, and many neglects of duty took place. The grace of God was however still working within them; it warned them of their danger, it reminded them of their duty, it checked them with remorse, and filled their souls with a lively apprehension of being eternally lost. But dallying with the temptation, and being pleased with the objects, that allured their senses, they stifled those interior admonitions. Instead of having recourse to those spiritual helps, which God in his wisdom has ordained for the support of the soul in her distresses, they now shunned the light, they were afraid of being disturbed in their dreams of happiness, they neither would examine nor admit advice. Thus being exposed to the illusions of their own self-in-

fusi-

sufficiency, they fell into great errors, and their errors hurried them into the broad way that leads to perdition. A perplexed obscurity, like a mist, then overspread their minds, and the lamp of faith growing more and more dim, they became strangely prejudiced in favour of their worldly notions. they set up arguments to justify their errors, they reasoned upon false principles, and formed to themselves a false conscience, so that they became callous to the stings of remorse, amidst the greatest irregularities. A blindness of the understanding, an obduracy of heart, and an obstinacy in sin being thus gradually brought on, final impenitence is usually the dreadful consequence.

Such, my Brethren, are the steps, by which the wisdom of the world insensibly leads its deluded followers to destruction. This is the wisdom, which descends not from above, but which springs from the earth, as St. James testifies,* and is infused by the prince of darkness into the minds of thoughtless Christians. There, grafted on the stock of human pride, it is formed by self-conceit, nourished by vanity, and propagated by fashion, till loaded with the fruits of vice and infidelity, it is at last cut down by death, and cast, like cockle, into the fire to be burnt. Men of the present generation seem not disposed to hear or to believe these alarming truths; but the day will
come,

* C. iii.

come, when they and the world itself shall believe them, tho' too late for their salvation.

O divine Wisdom, come timely to our aid, and dispel the clouds of infidelity that gather from every quarter round us. Come and point out our way through the dark and intricate mazes, that divide and perplex our progress. Under thy direction we shall never err, under thy guidance we shall never stray. Under the influence of thy divine rays enlightened will be our reason, considerate will be our words, and prudent will be our steps in the pursuit of our last end. For they who are actuated with thy spirit, always keep their last end in view, and steadily pursue it.

Wherefore let us, my Brethren, be assured, that as God alone is the source of true wisdom, so we can no otherwise partake of its fruits, than by making its maxims the rule of our conduct. To secure our salvation it is not enough to know what true wisdom is; we must moreover conform our practice to the dictates of that knowledge. This is the knowledge which has roused the faith, and animated the zeal of all faithful believers in every age: this is the knowledge, which disclosed to them the emptiness of all transitory enjoyments, and pushed them on in the acquisition of such, as should never end: this is the knowledge, which opened to them the prospect of being one day happy with the Blessed in heaven, and made them
conclude

conclude, that no preparation could be deemed too great, and no care superfluous, while an eternity of happiness was yet pending. This, my Brethren is important knowledge; this is the true and only wisdom we are to consult in the regulation of our lives and manners. All other pretended knowledge in point of morals, call it prudence, call it wisdom, or what other name you please, as long as it leads us from our last end, is nothing less than folly and deception.

Hence in the second place we cannot but see, how deplorable the blindness is of those, who are so wholly engaged either in the cares or amusements of the present life, as to allow themselves no time to think of, or to provide for the next. In the height of their prosperity, while the world smiles and caresses them, they forget the glorious crown, which is prepared for them in heaven, and foolishly forsake the narrow and the only path, that leads to it. Intoxicated with the cup of worldly enchantments, they give up the joys of heaven; they let go an everlasting substance to catch at a fleeting shadow. The virtues of the gospel are by them deemed too vulgar to make a part of their plan of life. With pity or contempt they look down upon the man who has virtue enough to withstand the allurements of vice, who prefers the testimony of an upright conscience to the flattering offers of improving his fortune.

But

But how different will their sentiments and their language be, when at the last day they shall stand arraigned before the tribunal of an all-knowing God? The Holy Ghost informs us.* Then shall the just stand with great constancy, says the sacred text, opposite to those by whom they were once afflicted. With fruitless repentance and unavailing groans shall the wicked say, pointing to the Just, these are they, whom we formerly held in derision and contempt: fools as we were, we esteemed their life no better than madness, and their end void of honour. But, behold, they are now ranked with the Children of God, and among the Saints will be their happy lot for eternity. We have therefore erred from the way of truth; the light of justice hath not shined unto us, nor hath the sun of understanding risen upon us. We walked thro' hard ways, we took great pains to work our ends, but the way of the Lord we did not know. What profit then have we derived from pride, and what advantage has the boasting of our riches brought us? They are passed away, like a shadow, so have we also ceased to be. Our imaginary greatness vanished with our lives; endless misery is the punishment of our folly.

Hence in the third place we see, how much it behoves us to be upon our guard. Nothing so effectually saps the foundation of faith, and nothing so strongly draws us from the duties of religion, as
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* Wisdom v.

an inordinate attachment to the world. Therefore the beloved Apostle charges us not to settle our affection on the world, nor on the things that are in it.* For we are easily, and we are pleasingly seduced, when we are once in love with our seducer. The world flatters us with its vanities, and seduces us by its maxims. The language it speaks, and the example it gives, make strong impressions upon an unguarded heart: they poison our thoughts, they awaken our passions, and insensibly dispose us to run into the greatest disorders. By frequently conversing with the loose and unprincipled part of mankind, we learn to think, to speak and act, as they do. The securest means of guarding our innocence is to shun the danger of losing it. For whoever loves the danger, will perish in it.† The world will probably laugh at our prudence and call it folly.

But let us reflect, and it is the reflection I will end with, that as there is a reputed wisdom, which is real folly, so there is likewise a reputed folly, which is true wisdom in the sight of God. The doctrine of the cross, says St Paul,‡ is folly in the opinion of those, who do not believe: but to those, who truly believe, it conveys the most convincing proofs of the power and wisdom of God. To be humble, chaste, and poor by choice, to submit patiently for conscience sake to the penal decrees of persecution and oppression, and to give up the
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* 1 Ep. c. ii. † Eccl. iii. ‡ 1 Cor. c. i.

inviting pursuits of interest and ambition for the duty of following Jesus Christ the crucified, is with God the height of wisdom; but to the world it is, as it was of old, a stumbling block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are the judgments of God exalted above the judgments of men, and therefore he has chosen the foolish things of this world, that he may confound the wise. To which of the two is it more reasonable to conform, to God or to the world? Which of the two shall we follow, which shall we serve? It is impossible to serve them both.* The one leads to everlasting happiness, the other to everlasting misery.

To God we must humbly have recourse. To God we must earnestly address our prayer, that he would please to enlighten and guide us in our choice. For no mortal man can come to a perfect knowledge of his duty, unless God shall give wisdom, and send his holy spirit from above. Without his divine light we wander in the dark, without his unerring guidance we are liable to a thousand errors and illusions, nor in a variety of objects can we be ever certain of the things, that are acceptable to him.† Grant us then, O God, that heavenly Wisdom, which sitteth by thy throne; send her forth from thy holy heaven, that she may be always with us, that she may always aid, always direct

* Mat. vi. † Wisdom c. ix.

direct and teach us to do thy will in every step we take.

O celestial Light, that enlightenest the souls of men, how wretched must be the Christian, who shall shut his eyes against thy bounteous rays? More blind than the man, who from his birth never saw the sun, he passeth his life in an uninterrupted darkness, or if at times he catches some faint glimmerings of light, they are but the glimmerings of a deceitful light, which like a nightly vapour rising from the earth, only shines to dazzle and mislead him.

Yes, the corruptible body we carry is a load upon the soul, and the clog of clay, that invests us, presses down the mind of man, that mufes upon many things.* True wisdom alone either takes away the burden of our misfortunes, or teaches us how to bear it. She it is, that inspires us, when we think aright; she it is, that reproves us, when we do amiss.

O God of Wisdom, preserve us from that false affected wisdom of the world, which counteracts the simplicity of the Gospel; from that profane wisdom, which has banished reason and religion from its circles; from that blind wisdom, which mistakes darkness for light, falsity for truth, evil for good, and good for evil. Preserve us in fine
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* Wisdom c. ix.

from that senseless wisdom, which is ignorant of the things it ought to know, and learned in the things it ought to know nothing of. None are truly wise, and none are truly enlightened upon earth, but they, who walk by the light of thy eternal wisdom. We are therefore resolved from this moment to model our conduct by it. We will listen to its dictates, we will follow its maxims. It shall preside at our deliberations, it shall direct our counsels. We will abide by its decisions, we will faithfully and steadily pursue the path it points out to us, that when it has conducted us safe thro' the difficulties and perils of our mortal pilgrimage on earth, it may open to us the bright and everlasting day of a happy eternity. So be it.

DISCOURSE VIII.

UPON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

All things are from him, and by him, and in him.
Rom. c. xi, v. 36.

IF there is any one perfection of God, which ought to interest or affect us more than another, it is that of his Providence. For it is by the hand of his bounteous Providence, that we are nourished, supported, and comforted in life; it is in the bosom of his fatherly providence, that we repose and rest secure. Providence is a divine property by which God powerfully and sweetly disposes and directs all things to their proper end. For as by his power he created all things in the beginning according to the model, which his Wisdom had adopted from eternity, so by his Providence he now preserves, moves, governs and directs them in the same beautiful order, in which they first began.

This sweet, this sovereign Providence of God is universal. It reaches from end to end; it extends from the highest to the lowest part of the
creation;

creation; it watches and presides over every thing, that passes on the earth, or in the waters beneath, or in the heavens above the earth; it combines the different parts of the universe together; it regulates and maintains that uniform œconomy, which nature observes in all her works; it unites in fine that wonderful diversity of natural objects into one great whole, which constitutes the system of the world.

How magnificent, how regular is the order of the heavens? how wise the arrangement, and how uniform the motion of the stars and planets? And to what can this wonderful harmony of the heavenly system be attributed, but to that supreme Providence, which has assigned to each planet the sphere, in which it is to move, and to each star the time, at which it is to rise and set. The sun riseth and goeth down, says the Wiseman,* and returneth to his place, and there rising again maketh his round to the south, till at a fixed and certain point it turneth back towards the north without ever deviating from his track, without ever shortening or protracting his annual course, and without ever refusing his usual light to the earth. The moon, tho' changeable in her aspect, never fails in her attendance upon the earth; nor of all the shining host of heaven is a single star ever seen to break the order, or to wander from the station assigned by Providence. Hearken to these things, says

says the sacred text, † stand and consider the wondrous works of God. For none but an infinitely wise and powerful God can enjoin such order, and enforce such obedience from his creatures.

Canst thou, says the Almighty to Job, ‡ command the morning and shew the dawning of the day its place? Hast thou entered into the depth of the sea, and walked into the lowest recesses of the deep? Tell me, if thou knowest, where it is that light dwelleth, and where is the seat of darkness; by what way light is spread and heat divided upon the earth; how the driving storm is directed in its course, and a passage opened to the rolling thunder. Hast thou entered into the storehouses of the snow? Canst thou bring forth the morning star at the stated hour, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth? Canst thou send lightnings and they will go? Will they return at thy beck, and say to thee, Here we are? How noble, how sublime is this language of the inspired writer? How descriptive of the providence, that continues to display such wonders in the order of nature, as no human reason can account for?

How admirable again is the alternate vicissitude of day and night? Each day announces its author to the day, that is coming on, says the Psalmist, § and each night, as it silently glides away, points

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† Job xxxvii.

‡ C. xxxviii.

§ Psalm xviii.

him out to the night ensuing. How charming is the regular and continual succession of the seasons, that enrich and diversify the year? How wonderful, how beautiful is the multiplicity of flowers, plants and trees, that adorn the earth, each one distinguished by its own foliage, according to its kind, and producing at the time marked by providence not only necessaries but even delicacies for the use of man? Warméd by the genial rays of the sun, the earth renews its annual crops and herbage for the nourishment of every animal, that moves upon its surface; or rather it is the hand of Providence, which decks the land with every necessary produce for the support and comfort of human life. Ask the beasts, says holy Job,* and they will teach thee; ask the birds, and they will tell thee; speak to the earth and it will answer thee, that in the hand of the Lord is the life of all, that breathes, and that he it is, who giveth food to every living creature.

From the earth let us turn our eyes upon the sea: the prospect is not less striking, nor less convincing are the tokens it exhibits of an all-ruling Providence. For what hand, but that of providence, could either turn its flowing tide or smoothe its rolling billows into a calm and even surface? What voice, but that of the Almighty, could make itself be heard by the foaming element, and positively tell it, Thus far shalt thou come, but advance

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no farther; here thou shalt break thy swelling waves?* What power, but the sovereign power of God, could restrain its rushing force, which, if left to itself, would overflow the whole earth? The sea then respects the boundary, which providence has set, and on meeting with a few grains of sand scattered on the shore, it suddenly stops, then hastens back again, fearful as it were of transgressing the command of its Creator.

This is not all. The same Providence, which confines the ocean within its proper limits, makes it likewise subservient to the use and advantage of mankind. The wide extent of sea seems to set one continent at so great a distance from another, as tho' no kind of intercourse had ever been intended to subsist between them. But by the wonderful disposition of divine Providence those very waters serve to open an easy and direct communication between the two extremities of the globe, to pour the riches of one country into the bosom of another, and to unite the most distant people as it were into one society. Whoever attentively considers, will be here forced to acknowledge the wonderful effects of an all-directing Providence, and to cry out, The finger of God undoubtedly is here.†

Such is the Providence of God in the order of nature. In the order of grace it is still more wonderful.

derful. To be convinced of the first, we have but to open our eyes and behold the works of the creation; to ascertain the latter, we must look into ourselves, and consult the feelings of our own heart.

By grace, my Brethren, we are the most noble, the most privileged of his creatures upon earth. We are stamp'd with the image of his divinity, we are endowed with thought and free will, we are destin'd to be immortal. By means the most sweet and efficacious our gracious God disposes and prepares us for a supernatural state of glory. No human understanding is able to explain the variety, the nature, the force and efficacy of those interior graces, by which he enlightens, animates, invites and draws our souls most powerfully to him, at the same time that he leaves us free. Those salutary reflections, those pious thoughts, those holy desires, those spiritual consolations experienced by some for their encouragement in virtue, and those alarms, those inward troubles, those secret remorse felt by others as so many admonitions to repentance; in a word, those inexpressible affections of the soul, and that interior voice of conscience, which speaks so distinctly and so strongly to the hearts of all, what are they, but the voice of our great God who continually watches over us, and directs our ways? Now if we attentively consider this admirable conduct, which God observes in the direction,

rection of his intelligent creatures, and then contemplate the magnificent structure of the heavens, the harmony of nature, and the beautiful order of the universe in all its parts, we must necessarily conclude, that a more manifest or more convincing demonstration of the Providence of God cannot possibly be given. Hence in an ecstasy of admiration the royal Prophet exclaims,* Wonderful, O Lord is thy knowledge, it is high, and I cannot reach unto it.

Amidst such palpable proofs of an all-directing Providence, will any one now dare to doubt its existence? Yes, long ago the fool said in his heart, There is no God, † for he said within himself, that he would sin. ‡ And even in this enlightened age, as it is called, the same senseless language has its abettors, and arguments have been wantonly advanced to justify the blasphemous assertion. Rather than allow the glory due to God, some have foolishly attributed the formation of the world to meer chance, while others with equal extravagance have maintained, that God does not concern himself about the things, which pass therein, and that the actions of weak, imperfect mortals are too insignificant to deserve the notice of an all-perfect Being. But an all-perfect Being surely cannot be indifferent to his own glory. God cannot with indifference see himself dishonoured and

insulted,

* Psalm cxxxviii.

† Psalm li.

‡ Psalm xxxv.

insulted, nor can he suffer his own sacred laws to be trampled on with impunity. If he has left man free in the choice of good and evil, he must in justice punish him for the evil he does, and reward him for the good. For if, as faith and reason teach us, an all-perfect Being actually exists, he must consequently be infinite in every kind of perfection, in power, in wisdom, in goodness and justice. A supreme power, without wisdom, without goodness, and without justice would be no more than the phantom of a God.

God is therefore infinitely just, and he will render to each one according to his works. God is infinitely wise, and he knows what order is. God is infinitely good, and therefore fond of order. God is infinitely powerful, and he preserves order in all his works. The maintenance of order by fixing and preserving each part of the creation in its respective sphere is the immediate effect of Providence. Is it therefore possible for man, who beholds these wonders, seriously to doubt, if Providence exists? No man in his right reason could ever form such a doubt. The swell of passion, the sway of evil habits, the desires of a corrupt heart, may draw expressions from the mouth of the wicked, which cool reason must disown. Elate with pride, and struck with the blindness of a Pharaoh, they may perchance affect to say, as they would wish to believe, that there is no providence to preside over them, that there is no eye to watch them,

them, no hand to restrain them, no tribunal to call them to account. The fear of offending being thus gradually removed, men will sin without remorse, they will trample on the laws of God, without considering the guilt or apprehending the punishment incurred thereby. Deplorable misfortune !

Yet such is the misfortune, in which thousands of deluded Christians are unhappily involved. Borne away with the torrent of a licentious age, they drive along the broad road with numberless crowds of their own age and rank thoughtless to destruction. Void of principle, void of prudence, and heedless of the order, which God exacts from all his creatures, they enter upon no regular plan of life, but such as whim or the rage of dissipation may adopt for each fleeting day. They seek, they follow no other direction, than that of their own misguided judgment; they engage in pursuits, which yield no true content; they wear out their health and fortune in the labyrinth of delusive enchantments, which leave them as unsatisfied and restless in the end, as they were at first. Unhappy mortals ! In the transport of their delusion they cry out to God himself,* Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him, and what doth it profit us, if we pray to him ? They therefore pass their days in the midst of plenty and in a moment are hurried down to the grave, into the
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* Job. xxi.

land of darkness and calamity, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.* The just but dreadful punishment of their past irregularities!

How different from this is the conduct of the faithful believer, who takes the sweet disposition of divine Providence for his rule of life? Convinced by faith of the noble end, for which he is made, he carefully employs the means, that are calculated to help him towards it. Whatever objects occur, which tend to draw him from his duty, he lets them pass as dangerous or foreign to his purpose. He disengages his heart from the anxious cares of life, knowing that he has a Father in heaven, who knows his wants, who is both able and willing to assist and comfort him in all his wants. He therefore relies with confidence on his fatherly protection, and sweetly reposes in the arms of his fostering providence, as in the bosom of a most tender parent. If temporal blessings flow in upon him, he receives them with thankfulness, but sets not his heart upon them. If misfortunes happen, he submits with patience; he still adores the power, which permits or sends them for his trial, being well assured, that thro' whatever ways God is pleased to lead him, he has nothing else than his final happiness in view.

O God

* Job x.

O God, how pleasing how comforting is it to unfold the nature and to consider at leisure the characteristic qualities of thy adorable Providence? A Providence infinitely holy in its counsels, and infinitely amiable in its operations; for having the secret springs of action and the efficacy of second causes at its disposal, it sweetly and effectually brings all things to their appointed ends. A Providence infinitely powerful in its decrees, whenever it chuses to exert its empire; for far from being baffled by resistance, it often turns the greatest obstacles into instruments conducive to its designs. A Providence infinitely certain in the attainment of its ends, and that oftentimes by means the most opposite to our feeble views. A Providence infinitely compassionate; for it administers comfort to all, who labour and are burdened with affliction. A Providence infinitely bountiful in bestowing the common blessings of life with an impartial hand upon the good and bad, upon the just and unjust. A Providence in fine every way paternal in its affections towards the children of men; for it liberally and gratuitously distributes gifts to them all, according to the difference of rank and station, that each one holds in the community.

But why is this difference of rank and station, you will ask? Why in the general society of mankind are some great and others little? Why are some rich and others poor? Why do some abound with superfluous wealth, while others pine with want and distress? Why amongst children

children of the same father is this distinction of fortune ? For the maintenance of human society, replies Providence. In the world there are the little and the great, there are the rich and the needy, they, who roll in shining affluence, and they, who toil for a decent competence ; and if it were not so, there would be no subordination, no dependence, no bond of union, no order, no civil life, no relative connexion between citizen and citizen. Yes, it is this inequality of rank, this difference of condition, that knits the bonds of society together : by this individuals are made sensible of the need they have of aid and support from each other. The sense of mutual preservation first drew them together, and without a due subordination among themselves their union could not last. In vain would the head command, if there were not hands and feet to obey : the hands and feet by obeying contribute no less to their own support, than to the support of the head. Without such a variety of functions, and without a mutual harmony and subordination among the members, the body itself would soon perish. For the peace and preservation therefore of the great family of mankind, divine Providence has established different ranks and degrees amongst them, without which all would be anarchy and confusion. Consequently whoever wishes to disturb the order established by God amongst his children, wishes evil to himself.

Yet such evil wishes are suffered not only to lurk in the hearts of men, but even frequently to burst forth

forth into crimes the most outrageous. For tho' our blessed Lord has denounced woe to the world by reason of its scandals,* yet in the world many scandals necessarily happen. Our heavenly Father sees and permits them; and it is in this very permission, that his Providence appears so wonderful. Every thing in the world, sin excepted, is the effect of his unerring Providence; sin alone cannot be his work. But the permission of sin is not incompatible with the more elevated views of his universal Providence. For tho' he has commanded us to serve him, he has left the execution of his commands to our determination. Having thus endowed us with free will, he respects the privileges he has granted us. He invites, he commands us to serve him, but compels us not. Sinners often abuse this kind indulgence of their God, and frequent scandals consequently ensue. But God, according to the general laws he has established, suffers those scandals for a time, and lets them go seemingly unpunished. He suffers sinners to partake with his saints in the common benefits of life. He permits a mixture of good and evil amongst his creatures, he lets the wheat and cockle grow in the same field together,† he nourishes both with the same rain and sunshine 'till harvest time. For he rather chuses to draw good out of evil, says St. Austin, than not suffer evil to exist.

We

* Mat. xviii.

† Mat. xiii.

We live in the midst of a profane world, where the incredulity of a false Philosophy decries the awful mysteries of religion on one hand, and on the other an unbridled licentiousness of manners ridicules the observance of its sacred laws; where the daring unbeliever is caressed, and the faithful servant of Jesus Christ is discarded; where we have seen the ancient nurseries of piety and learning overthrown, and religion itself oppressed and plundered by the very powers, that Providence had once chosen for its protection; where from the very precincts of the sanctuary we hear new systems started, that tend to scandalize the flock of Christ by their temporising principles and hazarded assertions, by which the faithful are exposed to the danger of being either shaken in their faith, or seduced from the primitive discipline of their forefathers. But, my Brethren, why have the ungodly thus devised vain things, why have they risen up, and conspired against the Lord and against his Christ? Is it to appear unfettered in their opinions of religion? Is it to counteract the designs of Providence? Is it to arraign the wisdom of the Saints, or to enjoy the malignant satisfaction of having disturbed the peaceful union of their brethren? Behold he, that dwelleth in heaven, shall laugh at them, and confound them in his anger.*

If by an abuse of power or of talents received, sinners chuse to transgress the laws, which God has appointed

* Psalm ii.

appointed for their observance, they will find in the end, that he has in reserve a superior law, by which he forcibly draws them back to the order he has established. For there is an established order of grace and mercy for the reward of virtue, and there is an order of justice and control for the punishment of vice. By refusing to co-operate with the designs of his saving mercy, men incur the wrath of his avenging justice; and by spurning at the yoke, which the mild and peaceful spirit of the Gospel imposes on them, they necessarily fall under the galling tyranny of their own passions, which if not subdued in time, must be heavily chastised for eternity. Thus has God comprised all things within the empire of his irresistible Providence, so that nothing in nature can frustrate his fixed design of making all subservient to his own eternal glory.

Sinners are not aware, that by their criminal excesses they accelerate their own punishment. They are permitted to shine like baleful comets for awhile, till they complete the measure of their crimes. Heavy judgment awaits them at the close of their career. The longer an offended God seems to dissemble the sins of men, the greater, we may be sure, is his preparation, either of mercy towards his elect, or of punishment upon his enemies. Far from presuming to search into the secrets of divine Providence, let us adore in silence
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its decrees, and under all the appointments of heaven let us humbly wait the issue of its designs.

To a Christian in affliction nothing can afford such grounds of comfort, as a firm belief accompanied with a filial trust in the Providence of God. God is our Father, and he loves us. God is our protector, and he knows what is best for us; he permits no temporal calamity to befall us, but what we may turn, as he mercifully intends it, to our greater good. If by sufferings he is pleased to try the virtue of his faithful servants, it is, because their services are acceptable to him. Because thou wert acceptable to God, said the Angel to Tobias.* it was necessary, that temptations should prove thee. Thus has the patience of Job been ascertained; thus Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and a thousand others have been tried, and their trials are recorded in holy writ, as standing monuments of that special Providence, which presides over the Elect, and protects them in all their troubles. For if God at any time is pleased to try the fidelity of his friends, he also supports them in their trials. If he afflicts them, he likewise comforts them in their afflictions, or if he exposes them to conflicts, it is to crown their virtues and to reward their victories in the end, which he enables them to win.

In all our wants, in all our sufferings, on every occasion and in every difficult circumstance of life
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it is a comfort, it is a happiness to know, that God is our fatherly protector. For if he so clothes the lilies of the field, and so feeds the birds of the air, that not one of them falls to the ground without his notice, how much more tender must be his care for his intelligent creatures? From the highest heavens to the lowermost depths of the earth, from the most noble to the most imperceptible of his works he stretches forth his provident hand, and sweetly but powerfully directs them all to their respective ends for the manifestation of his own adorable perfections.

The ways of his Providence indeed are often dark and inexplicable to our narrow understandings. The good and virtuous often are oppressed, while the proud and wicked smile in prosperity. Why he has so ordained, it matters little for the Christian to know any further, than that it is for their good. Our pilgrimage on earth, we know is but of short duration. It is no more than a transient exercise of our patience, a temporary trial of our faith, a meritorious preparation for a future state, which shall have no end. To give sinners a just horror of their crimes, and an opportunity of atoning for their guilt, he condescends to visit them also with temporal afflictions. Had they without warning been untimely cut off, as their sins deserved, they had long since dwelt in everlasting flames.

By

By passing humiliations, therefore, kind Providence disposes sinners to repentance ; by worldly disappointments it draws them from their sinful pursuits ; by temporal chastisements it admonishes them of pains, that shall never end. With reason then may the penitent sinner cry out with holy David,* It is good for me, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me. When the measure of our mortal life shall be run out, and the day of eternity shall dawn upon us, the veil of darkness will be then drawn from our eyes, and the glory of divine Providence shall shine forth in full splendour. We shall then know and confess, we shall then praise and adore, we shall clearly see, with what wisdom, with what efficacy and sweetness God has made all things finally concur no less to his own glory, than to the happiness of his Elect.

Great God, we humbly adore the sweet dispositions of thy universal Providence over the children of men. For in thy hands are the means and end, the beginning and progress, the event and consequence of every individual thing, that happens in the order of nature and of grace. From eternity thou hast foreseen all, that could possibly exist ; thou hast arranged all, and thou actually directedst all, that now exists, for the general good and benefit of mankind. Thousands of times have we experienced the effects of thy special Providence ; nor is there a day, or even a single instant

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* Psalm cxviii.

of our lives ; in which thy bounteous Providence does not visibly appear. Yes, Lord, thy bounteous Providence feeds and clothes us by the creatures thou hast made for our use : it refreshes us by the air we breathe, and enlightens us by the sun we see. Thou therefore art our strong support, our strength and comfort on all occasions. O grant we may never be either undeserving of thy goodness towards us, or forgetful of our dependence on thee. Thro' thy grace we will ever praise thee in all thy works, we will behold thee in all thy creatures, we will call upon thee in all our wants, we will serve thee in all our works. Such at least is the present purpose of our hearts ; we will do our utmost to serve thee well. Aid us then, good Lord, by thy holy grace to do what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.

DISCOURSE IX.

UPON THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

How good is God! Psalm lxxii.

GOODNESS is a perfection so essential to God, that it seems to form, as it were, his distinguished character, and to constitute his whole nature. Such at least is the idea we form and such are the effects we daily experience of the divine Goodness towards us, that we are naturally induced to think and to speak no otherwise of God, than of a being infinitely good and bountiful. Bounty seems to be his darling property, since to be with the sons of men, and to pour his blessings on them is his express delight.* When we behold the wonderful works of the creation, we admire and adore the power, that wrought them: but when we reflect, that God in his goodness has made these wonderful works of his omnipotence subservient to our use and happiness, we admire still more; we adore and praise. The inspired writers, eager to communicate the lofty sentiments they entertained of God's adorable perfections, magnify him with titles the most expressive of his
supreme

* Prov. viii.

supreme excellence. They stile him the most High, the Wonderful, the Strong, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord God of Powers. But the title, which seems the most expressive of his excellence, is that of the Good and Bountiful.

The Bounty of God considered in itself is a natural inclination and propensity of will to communicate himself to his creatures, and to do them good by showering down his blessings on them. Now as the divine essence is infinite in perfection, God is naturally inclined to communicate himself to his creatures, were they capable, in an infinite degree. But since the condition of our nature is too limited for such a communication, God in the effusions of his goodness towards us proportions the measure of his gifts to our capacity, and pours them out according to our respective wants and exigencies.

From this inexhaustible fund of goodness in God, springs his ineffable love for man. His love manifests itself in one continued flow of blessings, which he imparts to man, and which man by virtue of the same love gives back to him again, as to their first origin and last end. For as the love, which proceeds from God, descends and expands itself upon his creatures, so it likewise returns, and draws the heart of his creatures back to God, the eternal fountain from whence all goodness flows. Thus by the laws of reciprocal love, the same motive, which inclines the God of goodness to stoop

to man, lifts the heart of man to God. And in this sense it is, that the love of God is called an extatic love ; because it transports and carries the person, who loves to the immediate object of his love ; the effect of which is an affectionate union of God with man, and of man with God. But in this we must carefully observe, that God is always the first and principal mover, without whose aid we cannot advance even the least step towards him. By a gratuitous act of goodness God first enlightens the mind and excites the affection of our soul ; the soul by an act of her free will then consents, and follows the sweet attractive of divine grace ; and thus by an union of love cleaves to God the center of her happiness.

The sun exhibits a strong resemblance of the effects produced by this reciprocal love, which passes between God and a devout soul. The sun is the great principle of natural light and heat : it sheds its benign influence upon the vegetative part of the creation, which it warms and animates : it refines the vapours of the earth, it dilates and rarifies them with its rays as it draws them up, till they at last dissolve and mingle with the purest light of heaven. So it is in a spiritual sense with respect to the love of God. God, the source of all good, imparts his heavenly light to a faithful soul, and kindles in her the fire of his holy love. Being warmed by the sacred flame, the soul then glows with zeal in the divine service ; she becomes
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more elevated in her sentiments of Christian perfection; she no longer rests in the enjoyment of worldly objects, but being by degrees disengaged from all terrene affections and desires, she soars in thought to God, earnestly wishing to be dissolved, that she may see and enjoy him face to face in the kingdom of his glory.

That we may acquire a more comprehensive knowledge of this bounteous will of God in the love he bears us, let us consider it in the five following points of view. In the first place let us consider the sovereign majesty of Him, who loves; secondly the lowly condition of those he loves; thirdly the signal benefits, that accompany his love; fourthly the special manner, in which he testifies his love; fifthly the motive and the end, for which he loves.

1st. Let us consider who it is, that loves us. It is God himself: it is a God of infinite majesty, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who loves, and even caresses us with his love. He has loved us from eternity. Before we had a being, he cast an eye of predilection upon us, by a special act of benevolence he singled us out and drew us into life, as the objects of his affection. What an honour, what happiness, my Brethren, to have been thus distinguished by a God infinitely wise and holy! How high ought to be our esteem of so singular a fa-

vour, how active our endeavours to deserve, and how attentive our care to preserve it ?

In the palaces of earthly kings eager and jealous is the strife of courtiers to gain the good graces of their prince. Every attention is paid and every opportunity watched to obtain the royal bounty, not only on account of the honour, but of the advantages also, that attend it. Now if the good will of an earthly king, who is but a man equally mortal as ourselves, is so much coveted and sought after, how zealous, how watchful ought we always to be in soliciting the grace and friendship of Almighty God ? For as much as the heavens are elevated above the earth, or as much as eternal goods surpass the toys of temporal enjoyments, so much is the majesty of God exalted above all earthly greatness, and so much does his love excel whatever is thought most valuable and precious in the world.

ndly. But who are these darling objects, whom so great a God has thus deigned to love ? Are they the immortal princes of his kingdom, the bright partakers of his glory, the pure and incorporeal Spirits of his heavenly court, whose only employment is to adore, to love and praise his sovereign greatness ? No: they are the weak, the poor, the imperfect mortals of this lower world. They are men born in sin, clothed with infirmity, and prone to evil from their very youth: men generally

rally full of themselves, proud and vain in their own conceits, often forgetful of the obligations they owe to their bountiful Creator, and repaying his goodness with ingratitude, with indifference and neglect. These are they, whom an all-perfect God embraces with the kindest love, and enriches with his choicest blessings. What goodness! What bounty! Should we see a subject of mean condition raised by his sovereign from a state the most abject to dignities and honours, how envied would be his fortune? But what are the dignities and honours of this base world in comparison of those sublime, those heavenly and eternal honours, which God has in store for his chosen favourite man. Great God, what is man exclaims holy Job,* that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why doest thou set thy heart upon him?

3dly. Notwithstanding the natural imperfection of man's state on earth, God has been pleased to destine him for a state of supernatural glory in heaven: a state, to which by nature he had no title, and of which without a special revelation he could have no conception. For little had it been in the estimate of supreme goodness to give us only earthly goods, and inadequate had it been to the great design he had formed of making us completely happy, to confine our hopes of happiness to the fleeting enjoyment of a few years, or to the transient objects of a vain delusive world. Therefore
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in the world to come God has prepared for us such joys, such glory, and such transcendent bliss, as no mortal eye has seen, and no heart of man can conceive :* a bliss proportioned to the bounteous liberality of a God, desirous to reward the faithful services of his friends ; an incomprehensible bliss, which in duration is equal to the eternity of God himself.

Such is the happiness, which God has prepared for those who love him ; and that we might be induced to love him with all the powers of our soul, innumerable other gifts and favours he has bestowed upon us. From the midst of darkness he has called us into his admirable light ; in the bosom of his Church he has nourished us with the doctrine of his Apostles ; from our earliest youth he has provided for our instruction in the ways of salvation ; he has made known his promises to us, and raised our hope into a lively expectation of being eternally united to him in his glory. These and every other blessing, which we enjoy in life, flow from no other source, than that of the divine bounty. Yes, my Brethren, all we behold around us in the vast creation, all we possess and all we hope for, are the gracious gifts of God, who has ordained not only the light of heaven and the whole produce of the earth, but the Angels also themselves, those bright and domestic Princes of his heavenly court to serve us. For he hath given his Angels charge

* 2 Cor. ii.

charge over thee, says the royal Prophet,* to guard thee in all thy ways ; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest by chance thou strike thy foot against a stone. These precious gifts he has bestowed to help us on in our way to heaven, and upon our entrance there, he will bestow himself to reward our past labours with the plenitude of endless glory : so that infinite as the Almighty is in riches and in goodness, he can extend his liberality no farther in our favour, since he has nothing greater than himself to give.

Let us now cast an eye upon those glittering and passing vanities, which the world offers to its deluded followers, and compare them with the solid and lasting goods, which a God of infinite goodness has prepared for his friends in the life to come. How light how contemptible do they appear in the comparison ! Yet such as they are, these are the vanities, which thousands and thousands incessantly toil after in preference to the joys of heaven. Ye sons of men, † how long will you be dull of heart ? Why do you love vanities and seek after deceit ? Lift up your eyes, and by the help of divine faith contemplate those immense, those eternal joys, which your heavenly father has treasured up for the reward of your virtues.

4thly. Let us next consider the fond and affectionate manner, in which this God of goodness is pleased

* Psalm xc. † Psalm iv.

pleased to express his love for us. For he loves us, not simply as a king loves his subjects, nor as a master loves his faithful servants, nor even as one friend loves another, but he loves us, as the most affectionate of fathers loves his dearest children. How fond, how watchful, how tender is such a parent's love? Can a mother possibly forget her own child, can she ever forget to love or cease to cherish the offspring of her womb, says the Prophet Isaiah? * Such a forgetfulness indeed is scarce possible in nature; and tho' it were, yet I never will forget thee, says the Almighty, for behold I have graven thee in my hands. Wherefore give praise, O ye heavens, and rejoice, O earth; ye mountains give praise with jubilation, because the Lord hath comforted his people. For we have not again received the spirit of bondage in fear, † like the Jews of old but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we are qualified to call God our Father. Our Father, who art in heaven, is the form of addressing God in prayer, as it is taught us by Christ himself.

Under the ancient law God governed his people by the terrifying strokes of omnipotence, and awed them into their duty by fear: but in the law of adoption he draws us to his service by the sweet attractives of divine love. They were his servants, we are his sons; and if sons, we are of course his heirs, heirs to the riches of his glory, and entitled to

* C. xlix. † Rom. viii.

to the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom thro' Christ Jesus his Son our Redeemer. For we are joint heirs with Christ to the crown of immortality, which he has purchased for us by his blood.

Behold then in how singular a manner the Father has loved us, says St. John.* He has loved us to such excess, as to give us his only begotten Son for our Redeemer, by which he makes us his sons in name and in effect. My dearest beloved, continues the same Apostle, we now are the sons of God; it is not yet manifest, what we shall be, or to what pitch of supereminent glory he will raise us: but this we know, that the moment he reveals himself in full splendour to us, we shall be like unto him. For we shall see him as he is; we shall then be associated with him in the participation of a boundless and incomprehensible felicity. What a profusion, what excess of love is this in the Creator towards his creatures! It is a love, it is a goodness, which none but God can express or even comprehend.

5thly. Let us then in the last place consider the motive and the end, which God has in view by so loving us, as he does. No increase of personal happiness, no prospect of any greater extent of power or dominion can possibly enter into the views of divine omnipotence. Being infinitely happy within himself, and essentially possessed of every

* 1 Epif. ii.

every quality, that constitutes unlimited perfection, he can derive no personal benefit from poor and helpless creatures, who have nothing, who can acquire nothing independently of the divine bounty. The love therefore, which God bears us is a gratuitous love, and has for its object our advantage and our happiness: that is to say, Almighty God dives into the immensity of his own infinite perfections, and from his goodness alone derives the pure motive of his love for man.

Hence that universal providence, which he extends to all his creatures; hence that tender care, which, without exception of persons, he shows to all mankind; hence that liberal profusion of his gifts, which, without distinction of times and places, he showers down upon the whole earth. He opens his hand, says the royal Prophet,* and fills every living creature with benediction; and notwithstanding the ingratitude he often meets with in return, he continues still to give, as tho' he had hitherto given nothing. For neither his goodness, nor his treasure is any way lessened by the favours he bestows. The one is as inexhaustible as the other. Of all the sons of men he remembers there is not one, whom he has not made, so neither is there one, whom he does not tenderly embrace.

Even

* Psalm cxliv.

Even the very sinner, notwithstanding the grievousness of his guilt, has a share in his fatherly mercies. Whether seduced by the tempting offers of a false world, or softened by the allurements of corrupt nature, he chance to stray from the path of virtue, God never ceases to check him by remorse, to restrain him by the fear of his terrible judgments, to rouse his faith with the thought of repentance, and to animate his hope with the offer of forgiveness. His hand is always stretched out to save his falling child from destruction. Yes, Lord, thou offerest him thy grace, and while he is bent upon indulging his unruly passions to his own ruin and thy dishonour, thou still entertainest thoughts of peace and compassion for him. Whole years have passed since he went astray, thou hast patiently waited for his return: by repeated strokes of affliction thou hast admonished him of thy justice; by visiting the companions of his irregularities with an untimely death thou hast warned him of his own danger, but hast yet suspended the thunderbolt of wrath, in expectation of winning him back by goodness into thy embraces.

The goodness of God, my Brethren, is therefore that of a loving Father, ever watching and ever providing for the welfare of his darling offspring. Men often vary with times and circumstances: they form or break the tie of their connexions, as it may suit their interest or their humour. Upon the many, who profess themselves friends, little reliance

is to be had on the reverse of fortune. The man in disgrace is commonly left to grieve and lament alone. God never varies; steady and unchangeable in his goodness, he has his eyes always fixed upon those of an upright heart, says David,* and his ears are always open to their petition. For he loves those, who love him, and he loves them to the end. § I once was young, says the Psalmist, † I am now grown old; but during my whole life I have never seen the upright man forsaken by the Lord. For the Lord cherishes his faithful servants, and preserves them as the apple of his eye.

How comes it then, that we so often see them labouring under a load of afflictions? Let us open the holy Scriptures, and we shall know. Let us call to mind the suffering lives of Jesus Christ, of his Apostles and blessed Martyrs, and our enquiries will be satisfied. To perfect their virtue, to enhance their merit, and augment their glory our heavenly Father frequently chastises whom he loves most tenderly, and if he loves, he will not fail to console them in their sufferings. Could we but disclose those secret comforts, which the holy Spirit diffuses in their hearts, we should find them possessed of a peace, which the pampered worldling is a stranger to. Tho' their senses feel the external pain, as feel they must, yet in their patience, in the testimony of a good conscience and an humble submission to the divine will, they interiorly possess their

* Psalm xxxiii. § John xiii. † xxxvi.

their souls.* They know, that the day of trial soon will end, that their sorrows will be turned into joy, that the light and momentary tribulations of this life patiently borne will entitle them to a crown of glory immense and infinite. Hence a constant flow of inward peace is even now their portion, which no external sufferings can take away.

Love, gratitude and zeal is the fruit we are to draw from this consideration.

To love God with our whole heart is his express command, and the motive alledged by the beloved Apostle * for our complying with it, is, because God has first loved us. Nothing so common as to say, we love God, but the affection of our hearts, and the tenour of our actions seldom perfectly accord with the language of our lips. My dearest children, says the same Apostle, † let us love not by the tongue or in word only, but in deed and in truth. For this purpose our love must proceed from a sincere heart; it must be a dutiful and an active love. This God justly challenges even for his own sake, as in himself he unites every charm and every attractive capable of engaging our love. Beauty, power, wisdom, goodness, and every other perfection in an infinite degree are his essential attributes. Let us therefore love this God of infinite perfection with all our soul; by the daily exercises of a virtuous life, as well as by the purest affection

tion of our hearts, let us honour and obey him in all things. This gratitude requires. To the bounty of God we are indebted for all we possess in the order either of grace or nature : he expects, he has a right to our grateful homage in return. Yet how often and how culpably have we disputed him his right ? Instead of paying him due honour for his benefits bestowed upon us, how criminally have we turned those very benefits to his dishonour by making them subservient to our own perverse ends ? Were the goodness or the patience of almighty God less than infinite, such monstrous ingratitude must have long since stopped the flow of grace, and drawn upon us the heavy punishment our guilt deserved. Let us then animate our piety at the thought of those many and inestimable favours we have received from the divine goodness, and the more deficient we hitherto have been in our acts of thanksgiving for them, the more earnestly let us try to atone for our neglect by a generous, by a constant, and unwearied zeal in God's service for the future. For if we entertain a due sense of the unlimited bounty and liberality of God, we shall naturally be zealous for his glory..

By inclination, by affection and interest we are strongly attached to those, from whom we have received or hope to receive great things. Is such the disposition of our hearts with respect to God ? Are we attached to his service, are we zealous for his honour, are we desirous of his being more perfectly

perfectly known, loved, and adored? Are we grieved to see his goodness abused, his authority insulted, and his sanctity profaned by a wicked world? Do we rejoice to see him honoured by his more faithful servants? Do we co-operate with him in the work of our own salvation, do we lend our aid to such undertakings, as tend to promote his glory? Or rather are not our thoughts in general turned upon useleſs projects, or lulled by sloth into a culpable indifference for every thing, that regards his holy ſervice? Such were not the ſentiments of his Saints, ſuch was not the practice of thoſe, who ſerved their God with a generous and ſincere heart.

Animated by the principle of religion, they vigorously exerted themſelves in a ſteady performance of their Chriſtian duties: by the exerciſes whether of an active or of a contemplative life they ſought the greater glory of God in all things; they thought their beſt exertions were but little in compariſon of what they owed to his divine bounty. An ardent zeal for his honour burnt like a pure flame within their breaſts, and urged them on to the moſt arduous undertakings: This was the zeal which bore them up amidſt the difficulties they met with, and pushed them on to acts of heroic virtue. This was the zeal, which made them ſteady in the works of piety, fervent in devotion, patient in affliction, indefatigable in labour, unſhaken in perſecution, charitable, humane, and benevolent to all. This

was the zeal, which carried the Apostles and their successors in the ministry beyond the limits of the civilized world to plant the doctrine of Christianity among barbarous nations in climes, which the most enterprising warriors could never reach. This in fine is the zeal, which animates thousands and thousands of perfect Christians in the practice of every moral and religious duty ; whose spirit is no other, than that of the Gospel, and whose sole ambition is worthily to serve the God, who made them.

Shall not such examples warm us ? Shall not such zeal kindle some sparks at least of the like holy ardour within our breasts ? We profess the same faith with them, we are engaged in the same service, we have the same promises for our encouragement, we expect the same heaven for our reward. With an effusion of love God says to each one of us, Son, give me thy heart.* He demands no more. Can we think of dividing our heart between God and his creatures ? Upon a thousand titles God claims the whole. Supremely happy within himself, and standing in need of nothing out of himself, from the bosom of his eternal goodness he has drawn innumerable Beings into life, capable of knowing, of loving and possessing him for ever. By a special decree he has been pleased to single us out preferably to millions, who shall never partake of that happy privilege. Yes, dear Christians,

* Prev. xxiii.

tians, such has been the impulse of God's singular love for us, that bursting, as it were, from the center of its own immensity, it has expanded itself in the formation of our souls in particular, which it has stamped with the image of his likeness, and endowed with a capacity of sharing his glory.

What earthly king ever thought of raising a subject to the state of royalty with himself, and of making him his partner in the same throne? But should any potent monarch thus distinguish some chosen favourite, it would be no more than the act of a mortal man, bestowing transient honours on a mortal like himself. God has done infinitely more for us. He has descended from heaven for the sake of raising us poor helpless mortals from the earth, he has adopted us into a participation of his kingdom, he has made us his heirs, and the co-heirs of Christ his only son in the crown of immortality.

Great God, how ineffable is this thy goodness, how wonderful thy love! Thou hast created us with no other design, than to make us happy with thyself. Thou hast enlightened our minds to know thee, thou hast moved our wills to love thee, thou hast dilated our hearts to receive thee, thou hast cleansed and sanctified our souls to possess thee. O Lord, thou art the God of our salvation: thou inspir-est us with holy desires, that we may see thee; thou helpest our endeavours, that we may serve thee;

thou directest our steps, that we may find thee; and when we have the happiness to find, it is then thou teachest, how sweet thy service is to those, who love thee.

O God of charity, for charity thou art, inflame our hearts with the fire of thy divine love; kindle in our breasts that sacred glow, that ardent zeal for thy service, which animated the piety of thy most faithful servants. Infuse thy holy Spirit into our souls, that henceforward we may breathe only after thee, that we may wholly live for thee and in thee, that our sole occupation, study and desire may be to please, to honour and glorify thee in all we do. O let no terrene affections, no base suggestions of flesh and blood ever tempt us from thy service. Change every sinful delight into disgust, and make every temporal affliction, suffered for thy sake, salutary and welcome to our souls. Let it be our comfort to think, that whatever thou ordainest is the most conducive to our eternal good; let thy will be done in all things. By an entire conformity of our wills with thine we desire to be united to thee both in life and in death. Pure is the joy, which results from such an union. Thou art our God, our portion and inheritance for ever.

O God, the supreme and uncreated principle of all good, we love thee with our whole hearts. From this moment we devote ourselves to thy service,

vice, and we earnestly desire to love and serve thee to the full extent our weakness is capable of. Many favours have we requested of thee, many more have we received; but there is one, which we now most humbly crave in preference to all others; it is the grace of thy holy love. Yes, Lord, it is what we earnestly ask, it is what from thy fatherly goodness we most firmly hope to receive. Give us then the grace to love thee, and to love thee with all the powers of our soul; to love thee above all the things created, to love thee purely for thyself, and to love thee to our latest breath, that when this mortal life shall end, we may then begin to love thee with greater perfection and with greater ardour for evermore.

DISCOURSE X.

UPON THE MERCY OF GOD.

How great is the Mercy of the Lord! Ecclesiast.
c. xvii, v. 28.

THE Bounty of God extends its influence to all men in general; his Mercy shows itself to the afflicted and to sinners in particular. The afflicted by unfolding their wants in humble prayer before the throne of mercy receive comfort in due season, and sinners by repentance obtain forgiveness of their sins. Mercy in God is therefore an infinite perfection, by virtue of which he compassionates the miseries of man, and is moved to relieve them.

To define the essence, or to demonstrate the innate qualities of divine Mercy, it would be necessary to dive into the heart of God, and explore the boundless depth of his divine counsels. But since to human understanding that is a thing impossible, we must be content to trace it, as far as our weak abilities can reach, in its external operations. The wonders it has wrought, and the effects it has produced in favour of mankind, may enable

enable us to form some faint idea of the incomprehensible perfection it contains. The depth of misery, into which the whole human race was plunged by the unfortunate transgression of our first parents, when duly considered, must convince us of the infinite mercy, that has been displayed in drawing us from a state of spiritual darkness into light, from the death of sin into a life of grace, from the deplorable condition of being children of wrath into the happy lot of becoming the adoptive sons of God, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Upon this foundation is raised the glorious fabric of a religion, which God in his mercy has revealed for our sanctification and happiness in this life as well as the next.

Behold, says St. John,* what excessive kindness the Father has expressed for us. He has given us a title not only to the name, but also to the privileges of the sons of God. This, my Brethren, is a dignity so great, and a favour so inconceivable, that an infidel world stands astonished, and knows not how to give credit to it. My dearly beloved, continues the Apostle, we are now the sons of God; and by this is manifested the immense charity of our divine Redeemer, since, for our sake he has laid down his life, and has washed us clean from sin by the effusion of his own most precious blood. In his divine nature God was incapable either of suffering or of dying; he was therefore pleased
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* 1 Ep. c. iii.

to assume human nature, that he might be capable of both. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou wert not satisfied with, says the Psalmist,* in the name of our Saviour Christ, then said I, behold I come. I have proclaimed thy justice before the great assembly of nations; thy tender mercies I have not concealed; O Lord thou knowest it, I have made manifest thy truth, and thy salvation. That we may therefore form a just estimate of the great mercy God has shown us, let us consider it under the different points of view, as it shines forth to us.

The most sublime, the most excellent, and most wonderful work of divine mercy is the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God. This divine mystery is at once the grand object of our faith and the foundation of all our hope. To draw us out of the abyss of sin, and to redeem our souls from hell God became man.† A God omnipotent, eternal and immense, became incarnate in the womb of a pure virgin, § was born in the form of a suffering infant, and dwelt amongst us. From the throne of his heavenly glory he beheld mankind miserably fallen from their first state, stripped of their inheritance, and groaning under the sentence of reprobation, till full satisfaction should be made to the divine justice. Nothing, that man could do, was equal to the satisfaction required. Touched with compassion at our miseries, to which
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* Psalm xxxix. † John c. i. § Luke i.

after thousands of years there was otherwise to be no end, the eternal Word descended from heaven, and put on weak mortality, becoming like to us in all things excepting sin.* The uncreated and only begotten Son of the Father, the image of his substance and the splendour of his glory, voluntarily offered and submitted himself to death, the painful, the ignominious death of the cross. What condescension, what mercy, what love! To redeem a slave the king of men and Angels laid down his life in agony and bitter torments. Yes, God himself in the second person of the most adorable Trinity came to seek and to recover that, which was lost. In the form of suffering man he charged himself with our infirmities, he shared with us in our griefs and pains, that from him we may learn, how to merit by them. By his own footsteps he has smoothed the rugged path of virtue to his followers, and for our encouragement is he also risen from the dead. What Christian, when he beholds Jesus Christ with a heavy cross upon his shoulders and a crown of thorns upon his head leading the way before him, will dare to complain of his own lighter burden; or, when he sees him rising in triumph from the grave, will not eagerly strive to partake of the same glory?

The second effect of the divine mercy towards us is the doctrine, by which our blessed Redeemer has instructed and reformed mankind. For he

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* Heb. iv.

is the true light,* which enlightens every man, that comes into the world. Before the day of salvation dawned, the whole world lay buried in the darkness of infidelity; it was overrun with errors, that disgraced human reason, and was habituated to crimes the most shameful and abominable. Blinded in their understanding, and wounded in all the faculties of their soul by sin, which they inherited from their first parents, men were grown ignorant of the most essential duties of religion, they had forgot the Lord, who made them,§ they had lost sight of their last end, they neither respected the immortality of their souls, nor distinguished between the amiableness of virtue and the deformity of vice. In defiance of the supreme Being they had framed to themselves gods of creatures, and adored the work of their own hands. Some paid homage to the sun, moon, and stars, others to brute beasts, to plants and creeping insects of the earth, while others in the wild transports of superstitious phrensy sacrificed their very sons and daughters to the devils.† or to gods, they did not know.

At length after a period of near four thousand years the Sun of Justice, the God of truth rose from on high, and those monsters of impiety, those fiends of darkness, fled at his approach. By the light of his divine doctrine he dispelled the clouds of infidelity, cleared away the gloomy hor-

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* John c. i. § Psalm cv. † Ibid.

rours of idolatry, and spread the gladdening beams of salvation over all the earth. That there is but one God, by whom all things are made, and without whom there is nothing, which has been made; that he presides over all, moves all, and governs all with infinite wisdom; that in the same divine nature there are three Persons really distinct, the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, consubstantial and equal in all perfection; that our souls are immortal, destined to subsist in a future state of endless happiness or of endless misery, according to the choice we make of a virtuous or a wicked life; that the heavens we behold, and the earth we live on, shall at length pass away; that at the last day we shall all rise; be judged, and receive sentence according to our works, are the sublime and eternal truths, in which Jesus Christ has instructed the heathen world at a time it seemed the least deserving of so bright a mercy. By a singular providence, we, my Brethren, have been made partakers of that mercy, and unpardonable will be our guilt, if we neglect to improve it to our eternal good.

A third effect of the divine Mercy is exhibited to us in the model, which Jesus Christ has given of all perfect virtues. The sublimity of his doctrine he accompanied with works of the purest sanctity, and thus by example as well as by words he has trained his followers to the knowledge and practice of true religion. Before the coming of our blessed Saviour, men were little versed in the knowledge
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and exercise of real virtue. A tincture of vice was often visible even in their most shining actions. Ambition, avarice, dissention, hatred, lust, and every other vice, which without a check from religion had either self-love or some inordinate desire of the heart for its incentive, swayed the manners of mankind. A God incarnate came, and with him came a train of smiling virtues in their brightest charms; humility, patience, meekness, piety, purity of body and mind, charity, benevolence. Nor is there in effect any kind of virtue, that adorns either an active or contemplative life, of which our blessed Lord has not given us a most perfect model. Drawn by the attractives of so divine a light, thousands and thousands of every age and climate have turned their backs upon the offers of a vain world to give themselves more perfectly to God. Witness the troops of Confessors and holy Virgins, who have renounced all earthly pursuits, and devoted themselves to the exercises of a solitary and religious life in imitation of their Lord in the wilderness and House of Nazareth. Witness the triumphant host of Martyrs, who have faithfully followed their divine Leader in his persecutions and sufferings, and have generously laid down their lives for his sake. Witness in fine the numbers of true believers, who have lived in the world, without being sullied with its vices, who in the words of the Apostle* have used the world, as tho' they used it not; who have conversed

* 1. Cor. vii.

conversed with the world without being seduced by its maxims, or perverted by its customs. Nothing less than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ could have produced such samples of Christian heroism, or in the midst of impiety have erected such trophies to religion. The like graces, are daily held out to us, and, if we faithfully co-operate with them, will infallibly work in us the same effects.

The fourth effect of the divine Mercy towards us is the grace of adoption. This grace we received, when in the waters of baptism we were regenerated anew, and admitted among the adopted children of our Father, who is in heaven. Being conceived in sin, we were born children of wrath, slaves of the devil, unfit for heaven, and unworthy of everlasting life. Such was our misery; such the misfortune of our state; the crime of our first parents had reduced us to it. But how honourable, how happy and how glorious is the state, to which the mercy of our Redeemer has since raised us! We are raised, I will not say, to the dignity of Angels; of friends or citizens, but to the dignity of sons of God, the heirs of God, and the coheirs of Jesus Christ. Sanctified by the grace, and adopted in the sacred humanity of his adorable Son Jesus, we have now acquired a just title to the kingdom of God, the title of reigning with him for ever and ever in his glory. How exalted, how holy is the rank, in which the grace of adoption
has

has now placed us? How infinitely superior to all the pompous titles and dignities the world has to boast of? By this, according to the expression of St. Peter,* we are made partakers of the divine nature, since we thereby enter into an intimate relationship, and contract a special union with Jesus Christ, in as much as we make with him one mystical body, of which he is the head and we are the members. Hence our virtues being united with the virtues and dignified by the merits of Christ, they become highly acceptable to God, and worthy of a supernatural reward. The benefit of adoption being therefore so very great, great also must be the obligations it imposes on us, and great ought to be our care never to degenerate from the noble sentiments it inspires, and never to act unworthily of the character it stamps upon us.

To relieve our indigence and to succour us in our spiritual wants, Jesus Christ unfolds the treasures of his merits, and pours forth the riches of his grace in full measure. This is the fifth effect of God's liberal mercy towards us. It is with this view, that he instituted the holy sacraments, which by his special ordinance continue for ever in his Church, as the visible signs and instruments of grace for the more effectual and more abundant sanctification of our souls. For there it is, that our souls are cleansed and sanctified by a more particular application of the merits of Christ; there it

is,

* 2 Ep. c. i.

is, that our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb; there it is, that we receive the infusion of fresh graces for our increase and nourishment in a spiritual life; there in a word it is, that we joyfully draw the living waters, according to the Prophet's expression,* out of the fountains of our Saviour. Thither all are invited, and even pressed to come, that they may share of the plenteous blessing: no distinction is made of sex, rank, or condition. The fountain of mercy flows equally for the poor and weak as for the rich and strong. To partake of the life-giving stream neither gold nor silver is required; a pure conscience and an upright heart give free access to every one, who truly believes and trusts in the mercies of his Redeemer.

It is principally in the sacrament of the holy Eucharist, that the goodness and mercy of our Saviour God so eminently appears. Jesus knowing, says St. John,† that the time fixed for his passing out of this life was now come, having loved his, who were in the world, he loved them to the end. For the nearer he approached the term of his mortal life, the greater marks did he exhibit of his love for mankind. On the very eve of his crucifixion, when the united powers of men and devils were conspiring against him, being at supper for the last time with his Apostles, by an act the most solemn and the most expressive of his last sentiments, he bequeathed to us as his dearest children the greatest gift that his wisdom could devise,

* Isaiah c. xii. † c. xii.

wife, or his love bestow. He bequeathed himself. Under the forms of bread and wine he gave us his precious Body and Blood for the food and comfort, for the strength and nourishment of our souls. Take and eat, said he, for this is my Body; drink ye all of the cup, for this is my Blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins.* No words can more fully or more clearly express what he then did; and that the memory of what he did might be always kept up, he commanded his Apostles to do the same thing. § Then it was he instituted that great sacrament of love, that pure and clean oblation, which, as Malachi had long foretold, was to be offered up to God in every nation from the rising to the setting of the sun. Then was fulfilled that solemn promise, which Jesus himself made † to his disciples, when he told them, that the Bread, which he should give them, was his flesh for the life of the world, and that unless they eat of his flesh and drank of his blood, they should not have life in them.

In this adorable sacrament therefore Jesus Christ our God and Saviour is always with us, always present, and always dwelling in the midst of us. In his comprehensive designs of mercy it was not sufficient for him to descend from heaven, to assume our nature, to suffer thirst, labour, persecution, torments, agony and death for our redemption;

* Mat. xxvi.

§ Luke xxii

† John vi

tion; he would moreover for our consolation remain with us in a most wonderful manner upon our altars, to feed, to strengthen, to sanctify our souls by a sacramental participation of his Body and Blood, really conveyed to us under the appearance of bread and wine. By this holy rite he continues daily to perform the function of his everlasting Priesthood according to the order of Melchisedeck; by this he renews the memory of his bitter passion, replenishes our souls with grace, and gives us a pledge of that future glory, which he has prepared for his Elect above. He that eats of this Bread, shall live for ever.* Have we not then just reason to exclaim with the royal Prophet,† The Lord is gracious and merciful, and his tender mercies are above all his other works?

These operations of the divine Mercy are truly great and singular. They are clearly specified to us in the holy Scriptures, and we believe them. But because they are done in silence and affect not our outward senses, they make the less impression, and excite no great sensations within our breasts. For such is our weakness, that the hidden and more wonderful works of grace pass almost unnoticed by us, while the least external favour out of the ordinary course of nature fills us with the most lively transports of wonder and surprise: as if the greatness of divine mercy were to be estimated not by what is really wonderful in itself, but by what appears new and wonderful to us.

* John vi.

† Psalm cxliv.

When the children of Israel beheld the divided sea open to them a safe passage from the land of Egypt, when they beheld the manna falling down from heaven for their food, and waters gushing out of the dry rock to quench their thirst in the wilderness, every bosom heaved with sentiments of gratitude and every tongue was loud in their Maker's praise. Yet these were but types and figures of greater mercies reserved for the law of grace. The salutary streams, that flow from our Saviour's wounds, as far excel the waters of the rock, and the heavenly Eucharist as far excels the manna of the desert, as the heavens are above the earth; and the happiness of being delivered from the bondage of sin by the grace of baptism as far surpasses that of being delivered from the slavery of Egypt, as the everlasting joys of the next life exceed the transient joys of this.

The mercy of God therefore is as boundless as himself. Eternal and infinite by nature, it began in the beginning of ages to manifest itself with wonderful beneficence to men, and has since continued to display such effectual proofs of benevolence to the afflicted as surpasses all his other works. This is the Mercy, that heals the broken of heart, that looses the bonds of the fettered, that supports the fatherless and the widow, that lifts up those, who are cast down, and executes judgment in favour of those, who suffer wrong.* This is the
 Mercy,

* Psalms cxlv, cxlvi.

Mercy, that so eminently appears in the very marks, which an offended God sometimes gives of his displeasure. For if he threatens, it is to move us to repentance, or if he strikes, it is to heal our souls. His chastisements are never equal to our sins, nor inflicted in the full rigour of his justice. With tender pity to those, who implore forgiveness, his anger soon relents and gives way to Mercy. For it is his peculiar property to have mercy and to spare. According to the height of the heavens above the earth he hath strengthened his mercy towards them, that fear him, says the royal Prophet,* as far as the east is distant from the west he has removed our iniquities from us. For as a loving Father hath compassion on his deluded children, so hath the Lord compassion on those, who fear him, because he knows our frame. He remembers the dust, out of which he formed us, he knows our days to be as grass, or as a flower of the field, which shoots up for a little while, and then sinks forgotten into earth again.

Our sins, it is true, ground a just apprehension of what our future lot may be. But even under that apprehension it is no small comfort to reflect, that sins the most enormous, when repented of, are no longer objects of God's indignation, but of his mercy. Let the wicked only forsake his evil way, says Isaiah, † let him return by repentance

* Psalm cii.

† C. Iv.

to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him ; for the Lord is bountiful to forgive. Therefore however great may have been our sins, and however terrible the judgments of God may seem, we are never to diffide in his gracious mercy, we are never to despair. Humble at the sight of our wretched misery, and sincerely sorry for the evil we have done, let us cast ourselves with a full and lively confidence into the arms of our heavenly Father, and we shall meet with strengthening comfort against all our fears.

O Father of mercies, O God of all consolation, how rich, how wonderful in goodness art thou ! How singularly good and merciful to us ! By the direction of thy special providence we are blest with the light of faith, while millions of our fellow creatures lie buried in the darkness of infidelity ; though redeemed by thy blood they never will partake of those saving graces, which thou hast prepared and preferably bestowed on us. And why is it, that we have been thus preferred, thus chosen out, and taken from the mass of unbelievers ? Thy mercy alone can tell. In ourselves we can discover nothing, that deserved so bright a mercy. Not to any merit of our own, but solely to thy goodness we therefore stand indebted, that we are now no more the sons of wrath, nor excluded from the inheritance of everlasting life.

To make us still more sensible of the many and signal favours we have received from the divine mercy, let us here recapitulate what we were, by nature, and what we are by grace. We were the slaves of Satan; Jesus Christ has set us free: we were-born the Children of wrath; Jesus Christ has made us the sons of God: the gate of heaven was shut against us; Jesus Christ has opened it again: we were bewildered in sin, we sat in the shades of death; Jesus Christ has enlightened and put us in the way of everlasting life. Wherefore bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all the powers thou possessest praise his holy name. With grateful remembrance record the plentiful graces he hath heaped upon thee. He it is, who forgives thee thy sins, who heals thy wounds, who renews thy youth, who redeems thy life from destruction, and crowns thy days with the effusions of his most tender mercy.

O my Brethren, is it possible that God should have displayed such shining marks of goodness towards us, and we remain insensible of our obligations to him? That a God of infinite perfection should have assumed our nature to become our advocate, our brother and Redeemer, and we repay his amiable, his adorable condescension with cold indifference and ingratitude? By sin we had provoked his severest justice, and he might have instantly cast us off, as he did the Angels, for
our

our first offence. But it pleased the eternal Son to descend from heaven for us, and to descend to a state the most abject, and incompatible, as it seemed, with our ideas of unbounded majesty. What earthly king ever thought of descending from his throne to raise a rebel and ungrateful subject from the death he deserved? Shall Jesus Christ then become our Saviour, and we refuse to co-operate with him in the work of our salvation? Shall Jesus Christ have been born in poverty, shall he have lived in sufferings, shall he have died in agony upon a cross to save us, and we repine at every little suffering and inconvenience we meet with in his service? Jesus in the bowels of his most tender mercy has embraced us all, he excludeth none. Me therefore hath Jesus loved, may each one say with St. Paul,* for me he hath been betrayed, for me he bled, for me he was crowned with thorns, for me he was nailed to a disgraceful cross, for me in obedience to his Father's will he resigned his breath.

Most gracious God, what return shall we make for this thy singular goodness towards us, or what have we to offer worthy of thy acceptance? An humble heart, we know, thou wilt not despise, though offered by a sinner. These are our resolutions.

First,

* Gal. ii.

First, with the most profound respect we will ever adore thy unspeakable mercy for having cast an eye of compassion on us, when we were sinners and undeserving of the least favour.

Secondly, with all the powers of our soul we will thank thee for having selected us out for mercy, while others remain unhappy victims of thy justice.

Thirdly we will be careful not to abuse thy preventing graces, which with so much goodness thou hast heaped upon us. What monsters of ingratitude should we be to insult the bounty, which so tenderly loves and caresses us? Or what punishment would not our guilt deserve, should we turn thy goodness against thyself, and sin with the greater boldness, because thou art merciful to forgive.

In the last place, we will beg in our most fervent prayers, that thou wilt strengthen our resolutions to serve thee, that thou wilt guard us from temptation, that thou wilt grant us the grace of perseverance to the very end, that when we shall breathe our last, thou wilt deign to receive our souls into the bosom of eternal rest.

These, Lord, are our present purposes ; they are the effects of thy holy grace. Ratify and confirm what thy mercy has begun. Rather may our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth, than
 ever

ever dare to profane thy holy name; and sooner may our right hand be cut off, than ever cease to be lifted up in prayer to thank thee for the past or to implore thy future favours.

And Thou, the most distinguished favourite of divine mercy, Mary the mother of our Lord, and Virgin ever immaculate, to whose maternal patronage we have been recommended by thy dying Jesus,* cast down an eye of pity on us the banished sons of Eve; and since thy soul doth for ever magnify the Lord for the great things he has wrought in thee, vouchsafe to employ thy powerful intercession in our behalf, that through the merits of thy son Jesus we may partake of his plentiful mercies not only now, but more especially at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

* John c. xix.

DISCOURSE XI.

UPON THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.
 Psalm cxviii, v. 137.

GOD being by nature the principle and essence of all perfection, to him all sovereign honour essentially belongs. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and strength are his, says St. John,* for ever and ever. To this sovereign honour, on account of the perfect knowledge he has of his own supreme excellence, he claims an eternal right, and that right no creature can divest him of. For he is the one, most high creator almighty,† who sitteth upon his throne, and is the God of dominion, distributing to each one that, which belongs to him.‡

Justice therefore in God is an absolute perfection, in virtue of which he necessarily claims due honour and glory from all his creatures. For this end he first created the heavens and the earth, and
 all

* Rev. vii. † Eccl. i. ‡ Jer. xxxii.

all things in them. The heavens invariably continue to move in cheerful harmony according to the laws he gave them: the earth in obedience to his commands pours forth its plenteous fruits in due season: the sea, the winds and elements obey the voice and speak the glory of their great Creator. For this end he created the Angels. These Princes of his heavenly court constantly assist round his throne, and in a state of glorious immortality respectfully adore, praise, and glorify him from age to age for evermore. For this end he also created man, endowed him with the gifts of original justice, and placed him in the terrestrial paradise, that after a period of faithful service he might at length raise him to a supernatural enjoyment of his divinity in glory.

Now the same eternal Justice, which determines God to ordain all things to his own glory, moves him also to condemn whatever tends to his dishonour. For as he hath loved justice, so doth he hate iniquity.* Hence flows that even justice, which he keeps in his rewards of virtue, and his punishments of sin. Sin is a wilful transgression of his holy law; it is an insult offered to his sovereign greatness; it is a daring violation of his supreme dominion over all creatures; it is an unnatural rebellion of a child against his father, of a servant against his king, of man against his maker. The malice of sin arises from the depravity of the sinner's,

* Psalm, xlv,

ner's will, but its enormity is measured by the greatness of the infinite majesty it attacks, and can therefore be fully comprehended by God alone, who alone comprehends his own greatness.

The Angels were the first, who committed sin, and from the dreadful punishment they incurred thereby, we may judge how heinous must be its guilt. Those bright potentates of the firmament, being dazzled with the splendour of their superior excellence, grew proud. They swelled with insolence against the power, which had drawn them into life. From the exalted station, in which they shone, they vainly thought of advancing their throne upon a level with that of their Creator, and of becoming like to the most High.

Millions of the heavenly host wickedly conspired together in the audacious thought. But no sooner was the thought proposed and fully consented to, than struck by divine Justice, they fell like lightning* into the burning lake, which was instantly prepared for the punishment of their pride. Not so much as a single moment was allowed them to recollect their thoughts, or to retract their crime: the same instant, that saw them guilty, saw them likewise accursed and miserable. Without the least regard either for their numbers or their dignity, or even for the honour, which their repentance might have done to the divine mercy,

God

* Luke

God in his justice hurled them down into the bottomless pit of fire and brimstone. Sitting upon his throne of majesty, he shall through all eternity discharge his bolts of vengeance on them. Kindled by his breath the flames of hell shall never cease to torment, and the smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever.*

How terrible are thy judgments, Lord God omnipotent! Who can but fear thy awful justice, O Lord of hosts? Innumerable Angels formed by thy own hand and formed in innocence, the brightest work of the creation were cast off by thee, and reprobated for ever. They shone with a glory more brilliant than the sun, and in a moment they were changed into fiends of darkness. For lifting themselves up in defiance of thy sovereign power, they were thrown down into the eternal pit,† and from being the darling objects of thy complacency are become victims of thy eternal wrath.

To replace the fallen Angels God created man. † Man in the full possession of every earthly enjoyment, that his soul could wish, turned his thoughts upon the only object, that was forbidden him, and disobeyed the will of his Creator. § Scarce had he committed the sinful act, but conscious of his guilt and ashamed of what he had done, he skulked from the light of day, and hid himself among the trees. But as he could not screen himself from the accu-
sation

* Rev. xiv. xx. † 2 Pet. ii. ‡ Gen. ii. § C. ii.

fation of his own conscience, so neither could he fly from the pursuit of divine Justice. God appeared upon the spot, called him to an account, and condemned him to the most afflicting penalties, which his posterity to the latest period of time will sorely feel. Adam and his guilty consort Eve, having thus forfeited their title to heaven, were forthwith turned out of Eden, and driven to seek for bread in a barren land, where they were to meet with multiplied afflictions, till worn out with misery, they should at last die, and return to dust. Amidst such sorrows they might have found some consolation in the thought of dying, if upon their death their souls could have entered into a state of bliss. But on account of their disobedience the gates of bliss were now shut against them, nor could those gates be again opened by tears, or by any penitential works, that either they or their whole sinful race could perform. The justice of God was not yet satisfied, nor was his anger yet appeased.

The sons of Adam continued to give him fresh provocations, and his Justice exhibited fresh instances of severe indignation. A deluge of vice had overspread the land. By the shameful corruption of their lives men were now become a disgrace to the very creatures, that had been made to serve them. In vain did the Almighty threaten, warn, and rebuke. His voice was not heard, his threats were not attended to, and his warnings not regarded.

garded. Touched with grief,* as the Scripture expresses it, on account of their enormous crimes, he doomed them to destruction. For this purpose he opened the cataraëts of heaven, being resolved to destroy not only man, but also the very birds, the beasts and reptiles of the earth, which had been created for his service. Incessant torrents of rain poured down for forty days and forty nights upon the earth; the waters rose fifteen cubits higher than the highest mountains, and, excepting the few with Noah in the ark, every living creature, which had moved upon the surface of the earth, perished in the deep. Without distinction of age or sex the whole race of Adam, saving eight just souls, were with a single stroke of the divine Justice swept off, and buried in one universal deluge.

The melancholy prospect of a desolated world struck the few survivors with equal fear and reverence for the Almighty. But to their children, in whose hearts the malignancy of sin still subsisted, the remembrance of it gave occasion of committing new insults. Sinners again conspired against God, and God again visited them in his wrath. In defiance of his power the proud tower of Babel rose, and swift was his Justice to descend upon the bold offenders. A sudden confusion of tongues forced them to desist from their impious project, and they were scattered † like vagabonds over all the earth. The confusion, that befel them, checked indeed
their

* Gen. vi. † Gen. xi.

their present insolence, but did not correct the malice of their hearts. An inbred propensity to evil accompanied them, wherever they went. Without shame or remorse they abandoned themselves to the most unnatural crimes, which cried to heaven for vengeance.

The men of Sodom and Gomorrha were of all others the most flagitious.* God rained down fire and brimstone to consume them. The whole country round to a certain distance was instantly on fire, like a blazing furnace. The towns of Sodom and Gomorrha and two other neighbouring cities with all the wretched inhabitants within them were totally reduced to ashes, and the execrated spot, where they once stood, was covered over with a lake of sulphureous water which remains to future ages as a monument of God's just judgments in the punishment of sin.

Similar effects of God's severe indignation some time after fell upon the sinful Pharaoh and the whole people of Egypt.|| Those rivers, that were changed into blood, those dreadful thunders and lightnings accompanied with driving hail, that broke down all before it, those clouds of insects, that destroyed what the hail had spared, that palpable darkness, which blotted out the light of day, that general massacre in fine of their first-born, which the exterminating Angel made in one night's time

* Gen. xviii, xix. || Exodus viii.

time over all the land, what are they but so many eloquent tongues, which once announced to Egypt the heavy vengeance of an irritated God, and still proclaim what they also have to fear, who imitate the obstinacy of that sinful nation? Those scourges made no salutary impressions on the heart of Pharaoh. With unrelenting fury he still persecuted the Israelites, who under the divine protection had retreated to the banks of the Red sea.* There they lay encamped in a defenceless state with their wives and children; there the tyrant at the head of a numerous army overtook them. To the trembling fugitives destruction seemed inevitable; and then it was, that the arm of divine Justice interposed for their safety. Moses full of confidence advanced to the water's edge; a strong wind arose; the sea divided, and opened to him and his people a dry passage to the opposite shore. The Egyptians rushed headlong after them into the middle of the abyss. Moses stretched out his hand, and the waters closed. Shut up within the bosom of the deep Pharaoh there perished with his host, with his chariots and horsemen, leaving to the world a frightful instance, that God in the Dispensation of his avenging justice has his times and moments, which no potentate on earth can either shorten or prolong.

Sennacherib, § the potent king of Assyria, had like Pharaoh, blasphemed the Lord of hosts, and threatened

* Exodus xiv. § 4 Kings xix.

threatened ruin to the holy city of Jerusalem. The exterminating Angel entered at night into his camp by the command of God, and slew by sudden death a hundred and eighty-five thousand of his troops, sparing only the tyrant's life, that he might fall soon after more ingloriously by the hands of his own sons.

Not less palpable proofs of his indignation has God frequently given in different ages and in different ways not against some particular delinquents only, but against whole families and nations. At what precise period a nation's crimes may amount to such a magnitude, as to draw some exemplary chastisement on them, no human opinion can ascertain. But with respect to many nations that precise period is clearly pointed out in the holy scriptures. Witness the destruction of the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires; witness also the overthrow and desolation of Jerusalem itself with the whole Jewish nation, in punishment of their sins, as is specified by the Prophet Daniel.*

To an attentive reader, who considers the rise, progress, and downfall of modern kingdoms, and compares them with what the inspired writers mention of the ancient, it will appear that the arm of divine Justice is not shortened. For God is immutable in his decrees, his hatred of sin is not

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lessened,

* C. vii, viii, ix.

lessened, nor is his manner of chastising sinners different from what it was. Wars, pestilence, and famine are still the usual scourges in the hand of God to punish a sinful people. But more inclined to spare than to punish, he for a while dissembles the provocations they give him; he exhorts, he threatens, and with patience waits, till the measure of their crimes be filled up: in angry justice he then pours out his vengeance on them. Heavy is the vengeance, that awaits the sins of a Christian people.

Christians are the chosen people of God: they are his sons by adoption, they are privileged with graces peculiar to themselves. The guilt of their transgressions rises in proportion to the graces they have been favoured with. That infidels and heathens, who have never been enlightened with the rays of truth, should run into every excess of corrupt nature, we cannot wonder. But when we see religion insulted in the very bosom of Christianity, and ridiculed by Christians themselves; when we see its duties neglected, its laws contemned, its truths impugned, and its mysteries disbelieved even by its own followers; or when in violation of every moral and religious precept we behold a deluge of abominations and vices bearing every virtue down before it, can we be at a loss to account for the public calamities that afflict mankind? The visible distress of nations groaning under the weight of public grievances, the
convulsion

convulsion of kingdoms, the disunion of states and empires, what are they, but the scourging strokes of divine Justice upon a wicked people? This is the bitter cup mentioned by the Psalmist*, which is in the hand of the Lord, full of a strong mixture; it is poured out from one end of the world to the other; its dregs are not yet exhausted; all sinners of the earth shall drink thereof.

These calamities no doubt are heavy and afflict-
ing; yet they are but passing evils, external only and medicinal pains, inflicted indeed by Justice, but tempered by the hand of Mercy to prevent more dreadful consequences. For there are other effects of divine justice, there are other scourges, other penalties, which though not so perceptible to the senses, are more fatal to the soul. I mean the subtraction of those internal graces, which God refuses to those, who are obstinately disposed not to co-operate with them. I mean that deplorable blindness of mind, which shuts the sinner's eyes upon the evil he commits. I mean that unhappy hardness of heart, which under the guilt of most heavy crimes feels no remorse. I mean in fine that strange perversity of will, which leads to final impenitence. How many habitual sinners, hardened as a Pharaoh, or blinded as a Saul, neither see nor feel these more fatal scourges of exasperated justice? Intoxicated with the fumes of worldly vanities they sleep their sleep, as David

O 2

says,

* Psalm lxxiv.

says,* till waking in eternity they find nothing in their hands. The decisive stroke, which shall put a period to their mortal life, has been graciously delayed in expectation of their timely repentance. Heavy therefore must be the judgment, that awaits them, if in the end it shall be found, that the kind delay has only served to increase their guilt.

Exalt not your pride on high, says Almighty God to sinners, and act not wickedly.† For when I shall have taken my time, I shall judge even justice itself. I will search Jerusalem with lamps.§ I will search and judge the justice of potentates and kings towards their subjects, the justice of magistrates and judges to the people, the justice of legislators to their fellow-citizens, the justice of parents to their children, the justice of masters to their servants, the justice of the rich towards the poor, the justice in a word of all men with respect to one another. During life men often fare very differently from what their virtues or their sins deserve; the wicked are frequently observed to prosper, while the good lie under a load of sufferings. That God therefore may appear just, as he is, in all his ways to men, he will at the last day demand from each one a public account of all he has done, and assign to each his due reward. How strict and solemn that account will

* Psalm lxxv.

† Psalm lxxiv.

§ Sopho i.

will be, we may already judge by the signs, which shall forerun that dreadful day.

For there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, says our blessed Saviour.* Tremendous roarings of the sea, and great terrors from the heavens shall raise the expectations of men, and make them wither away with the apprehension of evils, that shall then call upon the whole world. Cruel and full of indignation, says Isaiah,† the day of the Lord shall come to lay waste the earth, and to blot out the sinful inhabitants thereof. The stars of heaven, continues the Prophet, shall no longer diffuse their light, the sun shall be darkened in its rising, and the moon shall shine no more. Then shall the last trumpet sound,‡ and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the summons of the Archangel all the dead shall rise. See the heavens now opening, see the sign of the Son of man now appearing in the firmament, a sign of consternation to all, who formerly dishonoured or betrayed it. Behold Jesus Christ the judge of the living and the dead coming in a cloud of terrific majesty, attended with thousands and thousands of Angels the ministers of his justice. The pillars of heaven tremble, and the foundations of the earth are shaken at his approach. For he comes§ to bring down the arrogance of the mighty, and to make the pride of unbelievers cease. Before him all kings and

* Luke xxi.

† C. xiii.

‡ 1 Cor. xv.

§ Isaiah xlii.

and nations of the earth shall then stand to hear and receive sentence upon all their works.

To public view the books of life and death shall be opened, in which is faithfully recorded every thought the most secret, every word and action, which shall have been done, uttered or conceived by each individual man, from the first use of reason to his latest breath. There to each one's account shall be noted the graces, gifts and talents he received, and the use he made of them; the evil he committed or gave occasion to, the good he was obliged to, but neglected to do. Then shall the wicked call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and to hide them from the wrath of him, who sitteth upon the throne of his justice. But the rocks and mountains of the earth will be then on fire and shall melt away like wax before the flame, that is kindled for their destruction. The judge in justice to his own eternal laws will immediately pronounce the sentence, the supreme, the last, the irrevocable sentence, from which there can be no appeal. The sentence shall be no sooner passed, than hell and death, as St. John says,* shall be cast into the lake of fire, and with them also shall be cast all those, whose names are not written in the book of life. This is the second death, the conclusive stroke of divine justice upon unrepenting sinners.

Behold

* Rev. xx.

Behold them plunged into the burning lake, enclosed on every side with raging flames, and howling with despair under the merciless tortures of insulting devils. Souls, created according to the image of God himself, and created for heaven, souls immortal and once sanctified with the blood of Jesus Christ, are by their final impenitence become objects of execration in the divine sight. As long as they were suffered to enjoy the light of heaven, they had wilfully continued in a state of enmity with God, and by their impenitent disposition of heart, which accompanied them to the other world, they still continue and for ever will continue in the same sinful state, and are therefore condemned to torments as lasting as their guilt. Therefore are they gnawed day and night by the worm that never dies within them; therefore are they cast into outer darkness, into the bottomless pit, into unquenchable fire, where they shall for ever weep and grind their teeth in anguish and despair. The hand of divine justice shall for ever pour fresh torrents of gall and bitterness into their hearts, without being ever moved by their sufferings or softened by their tears. Those tears of fire, which they weep, shall never draw so much as a single look of compassion, nor shall the blasphemous cries of despair, which they send forth, be ever soothed by the smallest glimpse of hope. From the deep abyss which ever way they turn their eyes, eternity is before them, eternity is always

ways present and always whole. Therefore in each moment they always feel a whole eternity of pains heaped at once upon them.

Unhappy souls ! It is for their sins, and for their sins alone, that they suffer all this. Infinite therefore must be the heinousness of sin, since infinite is its punishment : for to infinite justice it would be repugnant to inflict a punishment more grievous, than the guilt deserves. Hardened indeed, my Brethren, must be our hearts not to be struck with fear at the thought of everlasting burnings, and dead must be the feelings of our souls not to be alarmed at such terrours of divine Justice. For since God has found guilt even in his Angels, * what has not dust and ashes to apprehend ? Who can consider the hatred, which God bears to sin, and not fear ? Who can behold the effects of God's hatred to sin, and not tremble ?

To Christians, who fondly flatter themselves with the encomiums of God's mercy without attending to the rights of his Justice, these truths may perchance appear unseasonable, too harsh as it is pretended, and too terrible for the present age. The same objection has been started long ago even to the great St. Austin. But to those who started it, the holy Doctor replied, that he advanced nothing more than the plain and simple truths of the Gospel ; truths, which our blessed Saviour himself
never

* Job. c. iv.

never ceased to enforce, and which the sacred penmen have been inspired to write down for our use and instruction. Our reply is obviously the same; We have neither written the Gospel, neither can we blot it out. Men of the present generation seem as little sensible of their eternal welfare, as sinners were of old, and consequently no less require the most striking arguments to rouse them up to a due sense of their essential obligations. For as it was in the days of Noah, says our blessed Saviour,* so shall it be in the latter days before the coming of the Son of man. Unwilling to be either terrified or reasoned out of their evil ways, sinners will go on in the same manner as they did before the deluge, eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, till sudden destruction overtake them. For in those days great wickedness will abound, the charity of many will grow cold,§ and faith will be hardly found on earth.‡

To view the Christian world is there not reason to apprehend, that the days alluded to by Jesus Christ are either now at hand or not far distant? For when did the spirit of irreligion so generally pervade the body of mankind as in the present age? When were the principles of faith so universally laid aside, when were its mysteries less revered, or its precepts less attended to? Are not the eternal truths then to be announced, or is one part only

* Luke xvii. § Mat. xxiv. † Luke xviii.

only of the Gospel to be published, and the other part to be suppressed? Is the sinner to hear nothing of those motives of fear, which our merciful Redeemer has suggested in the strongest terms, in order to dispose and soften his heart to compunction? Is he to be left silently to himself nodding upon the brink of everlasting ruin? Is nothing to be said for fear of alarming him, and no effort to be tried to make him sensible of his danger, and to draw him from the frightful precipice?

O my Brethren, let us at least be solicitous for ourselves. If we are in sin, let us speedily repent; let us abhor and detest sin, because it is abominable to God: let us guard against sin, because it is hurtful to our souls: let us relinquish sin, because it exposes us, as long as we remain in it, to the continual danger of being cast into everlasting flames. If we have any time lived in a state of habitual sin, let us strive to atone for it by worthy fruits of penance. For our time is but short; the day of mercy is far spent, and a delay of repentance will hasten its decline. Death, we know not when, but death will soon snatch us from the world: the world to us will then end. Our soul shall be no sooner severed from the body, than carried before the tribunal of God to be there judged,* and receive sentence according to its deserts. What sentence, my soul, will that be? Will it be to condemn

* Heb. ix.

damn or to save, to punish or to reward, to fix thy happiness, or thy misery? No man knows: But be what it will, we know it will be just, we know it will be final, we know it will be irrevocable.

In this perplexity of thought, let us be careful to keep up that humble confidence, which all should have in the divine mercy. Fear and confidence are two virtues never to be parted; they should always go hand in hand together. Fear without confidence would sink into despair, and confidence without fear would swell into presumption. Let us therefore both fear and hope: let us fear the anger of a just God, but let us hope in the mercy of a kind Redeemer. By uniting the sentiments inspired by both, we shall cheerfully pursue the path, which leads to eternal life.

Full of this consolatory hope, O Lord, we cast ourselves at the foot of thy throne, and humbly crave forgiveness. It is thy glory to forgive. Great, we confess, have been our offences, but still greater is thy mercy. O cast us not off, lest the enemy should boast, that he has prevailed against thee. To be chastised and afflicted for our sins, we know is just. But rather chastise and afflict us here, that thou mayest spare hereafter. We are sorry from our heart, O Lord, for having sinned against thee. Have regard to our compunction, behold our tears; compassionate
our

our weakness, O God of bounty, and signalize thy greatness by pardoning the penitent. Magdalene wept and obtained forgiveness; Ninive repented and was spared.

DISCOURSE XII.

UPON THE INFINITY OF GOD.

Great is the Lord, and of his greatness there is no end. Psalm cxliv, v. 3.

GOD is infinite, not only because his greatness has had no beginning, and will have no end, but also because the perfections, which he is essentially possessed of, are every way infinite in their own divine nature. Infinity is here considered not as any distinct perfection in particular, but as an unlimited quality, which is common to God's perfections in general. The infinity of God is therefore the assemblage, the union and the actual completion of every pure perfection, that can possibly exist, so that to the plenitude of his all-perfect existence, no addition, no diminution and no change ever could or ever can be made.

God is infinite with respect to place; because there is no distance of regions so remote, and no space of the universe so extended, which he does

not

not fill and infinitely exceed. God is infinite with respect to time; because before all time and before the beginning of ages he had a Being, and in that Being he will continue to exist, as he always was, immutable and eternal. God is infinite in all perfection, because the perfections, which constitute his essence, are infinite themselves. Infinite is his wisdom, infinite is his power, infinite is his sanctity, infinite are all his other attributes. In a word all perfection is his essence, which being infinite by nature, infinite of course is his perfection. For in an all-perfect Being there is nothing, and can be nothing, which has not the seal of infinity upon it.

Of this infinity of perfection in the divine nature there are Three, who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* The Father by an eternal and comprehensive act of the divine intellect knows his own infinite perfections, and by that act produces an inward and distinct object, which is the Word of his mind, the express image and most perfect resemblance of himself, or as St. Paul expresses it,§ the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance. The divine Word being therefore the infinite and eternal object of the Father's knowledge, he has an infinite and eternal subsistence of his own, and is consequently a true and

* John 1 Ep. c. v. § Heb. i.

and real Person distinct from the Father. But as he subsists in the same undivided unity of the divine nature, which by an ineffable generation is wholly communicated to him, he forms with the Father the self-same infinite and eternal God. I and the Father, says he,* are One. Hence the Son, or the second Person of the Godhead is true God of true God ; he is the light of light, the increated Wisdom, the radiant splendour, which eternally issues from the Father of lights. He springs from the Father without being preceded by him ; because he now is, what he always was, and what he will always be from eternity to eternity. For in him eternally shines the whole incomprehensible glory of the Father without the least inferiority in point of time, dignity, or perfection. They are consubstantial, co-eternal, and equal in all respects.

From the comprehensive knowledge of these infinite perfections, which the Father and the Son behold in each other, proceeds a mutual and all-perfect love, which has the divine essence for its object : hence they communicate the whole essence of the divinity to a third Person, who is called the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is therefore a true and real Person, distinct from the other two because from them both he truly and really proceeds as from

one

* John x.

one common principle, and thereby receives a distinct Personality peculiar to himself: and as he receives conjointly from them both the same individual nature, which they themselves have, he makes with them the same one, supreme, consubstantial, and all-perfect God,

This is the holy and undivided Trinity, to the knowledge of which no testimony of our senses, no voice of creatures, and no light of natural reason can lead us, but which all true Christians, guided by the light of faith, most undoubtedly believe. Religion has nothing to propose for our belief more adorable, more sublime, or more wonderful than the mystery of the blessed Trinity. Here human reason in humble silence submits to the authority of divine faith, nor does it presume to question the truth of God's word upon a subject, which in its very nature is infinitely above the reach of our comprehension. For if the nature of God were only such as the mind of man could comprehend, he would that moment cease to be, what he is, eternal, immense, and infinite.

By the light of revelation we therefore know, that in the purest unity of the divine nature, and in the most perfect equality of supreme majesty there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and though the three are really distinct in their opposite relations to each other, that they are but one God, one Lord, one Omnipotent

potent, and one Eternal. For what we believe of the Father under the direction of divine faith, that do we believe of the Son, and that do we also believe of the Holy Ghost, without dividing the unity of essence or confounding the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. This distinction of Persons, this unity of essence, and this equality of greatness is expressed by our blessed Saviour* in the commission which he gave to his Apostles, saying, Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For if the Three were not all equally God, incorrect had been the expression, which places them on a perfect equality with each other: or if they were not all Three the one and self-same God, obscure had been the commission, which directs us to baptise in their single name. But to tax the infinite wisdom of God either with incorrectness or with obscurity in the very act, by which he commissions his Apostles to teach his undoubted truths to mankind, no Christian surely will presume. The beloved Apostle, who at the last supper had leaned upon the breast of his dearest Lord,† expressly tells us,‡ that there are Three, who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and holy Ghost, and that these Three are One. The three divine Persons therefore having all the same one individual nature, they have all but one and the same substance, the same will, the same power, the same wisdom, the same goodness, the same infinite ex-

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cellence

* Mat. xxviii.

† John xxi.

‡ 1 Ep. v.

cellence in all perfection. Hence the wonderful works of nature, which God has at any time wrought in the 'creation or preservation' of the universe, are necessarily the joint and undivided produce of the whole blessed Trinity.

By the light God has stamp'd upon us we are enabled to form the most noble and the most sublime ideas of his divinity. But however noble and sublime our ideas may be of him, they fall infinitely short of what he is in himself. God is great, God is holy, God is powerful, God is wise; but his wisdom, his power, his holiness, and his greatness infinitely surpass every idea, we can form of them. For our ideas are always suited to the capacity of our understanding, which being imperfect and limited by nature, can never comprehend the infinite and unbounded essence of divine perfection. When from the magnificent works of the creation we raise our thoughts to the invisible Creator of them, or when as the holy Scripture represents him, we contemplate the self-existing Lord of all things, sitting* upon his throne of glory and shaking the heavens with the splendour of his majesty, or directing the motion of the stars and planets in the firmament by his omnipotence, or pressing upon the hills and mountains of the earth, and bending them down with the journies of his eternity,† we conceive but little of his plenitude of perfection. For God is not only all that,
which

* Isaiah vi.

† Bar. iii.

which his Prophets have so sublimely spoken of him, but he is infinitely more. He is infinitely more majestic, more beautiful, more holy and more perfect than the most enlightened mind of man can possibly conceive. Hence the holy Fathers in speaking of the nature of God unanimously agree, that it is easier to say, what he is not, than to say what he is. For of him we can say no more, than what he has been pleased to reveal, and even in that we can speak no otherwise, than conformably to the language, which he has taught us in the inspired writings.

When from the burning bush* God called to Moses at Mount Horeb, Moses humbly asked to know his name; to whom the Almighty answered in these sublime and expressive words, I am, who am. Under the beautiful simplicity of this concise sentence is conveyed the most noble, the most exalted, and most extensive idea of the divine essence: I am, who am. By excellence therefore God is he, who is: and what is it, that God is? Is he wisdom, is he justice, is he goodness, is he power, is he sanctity? Yes, my Brethren, God is all this, and infinitely more than this. For by the unlimited perfection of his Being he infinitely surpasses all, that can possibly at any time exist. By his very essence he necessarily and eternally exists. Before all things he is, and before all ages he has his Being; he is and was from eternity.

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All

* Exod. iii.

All other things have received their being from him; they might or they might not have been. There was nothing, that required their existence; they had nothing in themselves, that could give them an existence. God alone is therefore infinite, and of God alone, it is truly said, He is: because within himself he contains the self-existing principle of life, the ever-flowing source and plenitude of Being. *Ego sum, qui sum.* Εγω ειμι ο ων.

From hence it follows, that not only the perfections of God are infinitely above the perfections of creatures, but that even the most shining qualities of creatures, when compared with those of God, are, properly speaking, nothing more than weakness and imperfection. By men fond of their own abilities this manner of speaking may perhaps be little understood. But on a subject so far above our comprehension, no wonder that the manner of conveying our sentiments should appear obscure, and even dry to such, as are indifferent in their search after knowledge in divine things. To speak by comparison seems a mode the most adapted to our understanding in this matter: and yet between an infinite and a finite Being comparison there can be none. When we turn our mind to consider the boundless magnitude of God's perfections, language furnishes us not with terms to express even the little we conceive of his supreme excellence. To form an idea worthy of uncreated majesty we should lift our thoughts

thoughts infinitely above, all that is created: to see God, and to know God perfectly as he is in himself, we ought to see him with the eyes, and to know him with the intelligence of God himself. For none but God can form an idea, that shall be adequate to the perfection of God. Infinite wisdom alone can comprehend the greatness and the fullness of infinite perfection. Man can know no more of God, than it has pleased God himself to discover to him. The deeper we search into the unfathomed depth of the Divinity, the deeper we find it. The blaze of infinite majesty dazzles our understanding, and overpowers us with the splendour of its glory. We never form an idea more sublime or more worthy of the divine greatness, than when we silently bow down and acknowledge it to be above our comprehension. Reason by humbly submitting to the authority of revelation pays the most just and most glorious homage, that can be paid by mortal man to his incomprehensible creator.

My Brethren, when we reflect, that God within the bosom of his unbounded essence comprises all things, that are made or ever can be made, when we consider that the vast and beautiful extent of the visible creation in comparison to him is not so much as a single grain of sand, or a drop of water to the universe, or when we contemplate the innumerable and shining host of heavenly Spirits glowing with the rays and absorbed in the
 plenitude

plenitude of his bright immensity, the mind is transported in a manner out of itself, and every power of the soul is hushed into silent raptures of astonishment. God is the impenetrable abyss of light, the unfathomable ocean of perfection. He is the beginning, the end and center of all we know, of all we see, and of all we hope for. Hence it is evident, how sovereign ought to be our esteem, our respect, and love for him, how ardent our desire to possess, and how prompt our zeal to serve him. That is the fruit we are to gather from this consideration.

1st. The consideration of God's infinite perfections will excite us to esteem him above all things; because we thereby discover, that in him are contained all the treasures of power, wisdom and goodness, that an infinite Being is capable of. His power is our support, his wisdom is our guide, his goodness is our salvation. These are treasures truly valuable, because they are to us the source of endless happiness. All earthly treasures are frail and of short duration. If, unmindful of eternity, men confine their views to temporal advantages only, on what will they rest their hope, when they come to die? As from a dream, says the royal Prophet,* they will then wake from their illusion, and too late perceive, that the objects they pursued were but imaginary goods, light and transient as visions of the night.

2dly.

* Psalm lxxii.

2dly. A lively sense of God's infinite perfections will inspire us with a respect for his adorable presence. God by his imminency is every where present; his eye is always fixt upon us. At all times therefore, and in every place it behoves us carefully to watch over ourselves in all we say and in all we do, as though we saw him with our very eyes. This respect should more particularly accompany us in our external works of piety and religion, because such works regard his immediate service. No otherwise than with the most profound respect should we presume to pray, because in prayer we truly speak to and converse with God. Since I have once begun, said Abraham,* I will speak to the Lord my God, though I am but dust and ashes. More awful still should be our respect as often as we enter the house of God, the house of public prayer. For if the Jewish Tabernacle, which was only a figure of what was to be, drew such respect from the people on account of the glory of the Lord, which rested upon its roof, how much greater respect is due to the Christian Sanctuary, where God himself resides sacramentally present upon our altars, as upon his throne of mercy, and how careful should we be to hold ourselves with due reverence before him? Even the glorified Saints in heaven, as St. John tells us,† fall prostrate before the Almighty, and lay their crowns at his feet, when they approach to him upon his throne. The Seraphims themselves in
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* Gen. xviii.

† Rev. iv, v.

their acts of homage, as Isaiah saw them,* stand respectfully covered with their wings, as not sufficiently worthy to look him in the face. And shall mortal man presume in the holy place and in the very act of divine worship to assist in any other manner, than becomes an humble supplicant, adoring God in spirit and in truth?

3dly. An attentive consideration of God's infinite perfections will excite us to love him. For how is it possible, that a God infinitely good, infinitely amiable, and infinitely perfect should not attract all the affection of our hearts, the moment we know him. Of all the perfections we admire among creatures, there are none that can compare with those of the Creator; there are none so excellent, none so charming, none so worthy of our love. To love God with our whole heart and soul is the first and greatest of the divine precepts.*

But when God commands us to love him with our whole heart, it is evident, that he will suffer no division and no rival in our heart. Hence the love he enjoins us is a sublime love, which lifts our souls above all earthly considerations; it is a holy love, which sanctifies the motives of our affections; it is a love of preference, which tells us to prefer his will before all things, and habitually disposes us to renounce every sensual gratification, and every worldly advantage rather, than lose his grace
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* C. vi.

† Mat. xxii.

and friendship by a mortal sin. For whoever loves even his father or his mother more than me, says our blessed Saviour,* is not worthy of me.

Let us therefore love him with all the affections of our heart; for he is our Father: let us honour him with all the powers of our soul; for he is our God: let us serve him with all our strength; for he is our benefactor, and the rewarder of our virtues. Let all nations and all the people of the earth unite their voices in his praise, exclaims the royal Prophet,† because his mercy is confirmed upon us, and his adorable perfections remain for evermore.

4thly. From the consideration of God's infinite perfections arises an earnest desire of seeing and possessing him in his glory. For we naturally wish to enjoy, what we are taught to consider as connected with our happiness. In God is united every desirable object, that can be conceived by the heart of man. In him, as in the plenitude of perfection, is centered all, that is great, beautiful, good, and holy: in him is the source of boundless delights, that flow with an infinite variety of charms without ceasing: in him the soul rests as in the center of supreme and perfect happiness, because the secure and full possession of all good leaves her nothing more to covet or enjoy. The
immense

* Mat. x. † Psalm cxvi.

immense, the eternal joys, which God imparts to his Elect in heaven, are therefore a subject of meditation equally sublime and comfortable. For at the same time, that they open to us a source of consolation amidst the miseries of life, that surround us, they also raise our views above all, that is earthly, and quicken our hope in the pursuit of what is eternal. The royal Prophet tells us,* when he lifted up his mind to contemplate the mansions of the Blest, that his soul was in raptures at the lovely prospect, and ready to sink under the strong desire he had of beholding the living God. The hart† parched with thirst, and panting after the fountain stream for refreshment, furnished him with a comparison to express his sacred thirst, which nothing less than a torrent of heavenly charms could extinguish.

Hence appears the deplorable delusion of those Christians, who confine their views to the acquisition of a false happiness, and seek to allay their thirst in the turbid streams of earthly delights. Earthly delights, such as the world proposes to its followers, are too imperfect and too carnal to satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul. However innocent they may seem in themselves, they become hurtful by excess, and if they are criminal by nature, they moreover leave a sting, or an irksome emptiness behind them, which the world with

* Psalm lxxxiii. † Psalm xli.

with all its enjoyments cannot remedy. Such enjoyments may indeed amuse and please the senses, while they last : but they last not long, and consequently afford no lasting happiness. The utmost they can do, is to create a desire, which they cannot satisfy, to excite a thirst, which they cannot quench, and to promise a satisfaction, which they cannot give.

This the wisest of men assures us of from his own experience, and this by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost he has left written for our instruction. In the intemperate transports of his heart he had said,* I will go, and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. He consequently refused himself no pleasure, that fancy could suggest, or his heart desire. But no sooner had he tasted of the fancied sweets, than he found them all imbittered with delusion and vexation of mind. He then turned his thoughts upon other projects ; he built for himself stately palaces, he planted orchards, vineyards and spacious gardens, he heaped together prodigious treasures of gold and silver, the wealth of kings and provinces, such as none ever possessed before him in Jerusalem. But when he reviewed the works he had wrought, and considered what painful labours they had cost him, he was forced to own, that he had been labouring in vain : for he saw in all things vanity and vexation
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* Eccl. ii.

of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun. We are therefore told* by our blessed Saviour, not to vex ourselves with uselefs solicitude about the perishable things of earth, but to be careful in laying up treasures for ourselves in heaven, that will never perish.

5thly. A due consideration of God's infinite perfections will awaken in us a laudable desire to serve him well. To serve a God infinitely good, infinitely great, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wise; a God, to whom kings themselves are as much subject as the meanest of their vassals, is an honour the most noble and sublime. Men often glory in the honour they have of serving some great prince or potentate of the earth, and fancy themselves supremely happy, if their services only prove acceptable. But what is the dignity of an earthly prince, what are the favours and honours of the most illustrious monarchs of the world, when compared with those of the most high God? A God infinite in goodness; in wisdom, in power and magnificence, admits the whole body of Christian people into his service; and as long as they serve him in spirit and in truth, he beholds them all with an eye of complacency, he accepts of every offer they make, he notices every pain they feel, he counts every step they take, he rewards every desire they form to serve him. Even a cup of cold water given
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† Luke xii.

in his name to a disciple, as he assures us,* shall have its reward in heaven, and that reward shall be an additional weight of glory, which shall shine through all eternity.

Let narrow-minded worldlings then pride themselves on the passing honours and advantages they hold from their earthly lords and masters; on a better title will the faithful servants of Jesus Christ glory in the noble, in the holy and meritorious service of Almighty God. By a special Providence, my Brethren, we have been consecrated to God from our very infancy. By an act the most solemn we have been irrevocably engaged in his service, before we could possibly engage in any other. We then made a public renunciation of Satan and all his works. In the name of the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we became Christians, that is, devoted servants of the most high God. Ennobled by this service, we aspire to honour and glory infinitely above what the world has to boast of, the honour of reigning with God for ever in his kingdom. Can we then, my Brethren, think of retracting our promises, of breaking our engagements, and of degrading our character by making ourselves the slaves of sin? For whoever commits sin, says our divine Master,† is the slave of sin. Let us be mindful, that we are Christians and devoted servants of the most High.

Let

* Mark ix. † John viii.

Let us learn to prize the dignity and honour of the service we are engaged in. Let us in fine on all occasions remember, who it is we serve.

For we serve the immortal and invisible King of ages, whom the wide circumference of the globe and the immeasurable expanse of the firmament are too narrow to contain. Exalted infinitely above the bounds of this visible creation he reigns in the center of his heavenly kingdom, amidst the choirs of Angels and Archangels ; he sits supreme above the Virtues, the Dominations and the Thrones ; he commands the Principalities and the Powers, and they obey with trembling : he tells the winged Cherubims and Seraphims to go, and quick as the flashes of lightning they go and return, as his divine Spirit directs them.*

Quicken us, O God, with the like holy ardour in thy service ! For thou alone art great, thou alone art infinite, the source and plenitude of all our happiness for time and eternity. What the world offers is little more than a dazzling sun-beam, or a passing vapour, that glitters only to deceive us. Thou alone art magnificent and infallible in thy promises ; thou hast promised to reward our slender services with a degree of glory in duration equal to thyself : the happiness thou bestowest, is eternal. If for the sake of enjoying the short dream of a fancied happiness on earth we give up the pursuit
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of everlasting joys in heaven, we act in contradiction to the dictates of our faith and reason.

Rise then, O Lord, and dispel the mist, which hitherto has clouded our understanding; enlighten our darkness and open our minds to the eternal truths, that we may at length rouse from our delusion and know thee, who art the beginning and the end of all.

DISCOURSE XIII.

UPON GOD, THE SUPREME BEATITUDE AND END OF MAN.

I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

REV. C. XXII, V. 13.

THERE is one supreme God, and there can be no more. He alone is omnipotent, and self-existing from eternity. In the full splendour of increated majesty God reigned alone before all ages immutable, immense, and infinite, ever blessed and ever happy in the boundless possession of all perfection. There then was nothing, and there had been nothing existing in nature, save his own infinite Being. God therefore is the beginning, the principle and source of all, that is. For what was once nothing, never could give existence to itself. To the creatures that are now in being, God might have given or refused existence, as he pleased. But having once decreed to create and draw them into life, he could create them for no other end, than for his own honour and glory; because to him, who is alone supremely good, supreme honour and glory can be only due.

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At the commencement of time God produced a vast variety of creatures, which he has wonderfully arranged according to the order traced out by his wisdom, assigning to each its sphere, its mode, and period of existence, till they all return to their final destiny, the dust into its earth, says Ecclesiastes,* from whence it was, and the spirit return to God, who gave it. Among the more noble works of God's hands there are his intelligent creatures, to whom he has given a spiritual being, capable of knowing and possessing him in his glory. Such are the Angels, and such are the souls of men. But before he would finally unite them to himself in a permanent state of happiness, he was pleased to assign a term of trial and probation to them both.

The Angels being all created at one time, and possessed of a more perfect nature than that of man, required no great length of time, and no succession of years to ascertain their merit. Their trial therefore was but short, and they, who stood approved for their fidelity to God, were put into immediate possession of the bliss, for which they had been ordained. But to the souls of men, whose existence is successive, a longer term was consequently allowed, before their general union with the common parent of mankind. This term is composed of that fixed series of years, which shall pass between the beginning and the end of time.

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* C. xii.

That series of years once ended, as end it will, the great day of eternity will commence. Then will the glorious train of predestined souls be gathered together, and return in triumph to the God, who made them: then will the whole united host of Saints and Angels for ever rest in the bosom of his divinity, the seat of supreme happiness and center of repose. For God hath made all things for himself, says the Wiseman,* and created all nations to his own praise, name and glory.† But when the Scripture says, that God hath made all things for himself, it is not to be understood, as if God had need of any thing either to complete his happiness, or to fill up the measure of his essential glory.

The magnificent works of the creation manifest indeed the glory of their Creator, but increase not his happiness or perfection. Whatever perfections appear in creatures originally flow from him, as from the fountain of all good. For within the essence of his divinity those perfections are eminently contained, and have been so from eternity. In the beginning of time he spoke and they were created.‡ Thus created they continue to reflect the rays of his omnipotence to men, but add nothing to the inherent lustre of his glory. However bright may seem the objects, that are enlightened by the sun, the sun receives no increase of light from the brightness they reflect. The glory

Q 2

therefore

* Prov. xvi.

† Deut. xxvi.

‡ Psalm xxxii.

therefore, which God receives from his creatures is only accidental, and consists in the homage and obedience they pay him. Let us but survey the harmonious system God has established in the universe, and we shall find it so wonderfully arranged and combined together, that all things in the order both of grace and nature ultimately tend to the glory of their great Creator.

The world is made for man : but man himself is made for God. The beautiful, the rich and plentiful productions of nature are by a bounteous providence ordained for man, as long as he sojourns on earth. For God has placed him over all the works of his hands, says the Psalmist,* and has made subservient to his use not only the beasts of the fields, but the birds likewise of the air, and the fishes of the sea. But lest in the midst of earthly delights sensual man might chance to forget the more noble end of his creation, and sit down contented with a temporary happiness, the wise disposer of all things has given us an insatiable longing after something more. He has given us a soul, which no sensual delights can content or satisfy ; a soul which breathes after purer joys and happiness more lasting ; a soul immortal in her nature, and by grace exalted far above the earth, which she considers as her place of exile, and therefore sighs incessantly after that heavenly country, where she may be fully satiated with the glory of God himself.

Q 2

Thus

* Psalm viii.

Thus conformably to the views of Providence this lower world answers two important purposes equally useful to man, and honourable to God. First, it serves man for his present residence, where as long as he remains, he is supplied with every thing necessary to support him in his way to heaven. Secondly, it exhibits a noble, extensive scene, in which we behold the works and adore the hand of our Creator. By viewing the bold and elegant strokes of art, that appear in some finished work of architecture, we become acquainted with the architect himself, in as much as we become acquainted with his talents and abilities, by which he is best known; so from beholding the visible beauties of the creation, says St. Paul,* we come to a knowledge of the invisible Creator of them. The wonderful structure of the heavens, the stately stability of the earth, the inimitable simplicity of nature in all her works announce to us a God infinitely great in power, wisdom and goodness.

Hence we learn, how the material and inanimate parts of the creation refer to God as to their last end, since by their steady obedience to the laws he gave them, they daily fulfil the end they are appointed for. This is the persuasive voice, the silent eloquence of inanimate beings, by which they proclaim the glory of God, and powerfully call upon us to concur with them in promoting the same end. The end, for which man has been created,

* Rome i.

ated, is infinitely more perfect and sublime; it is to know God, to see God, and to possess God in a supernatural state of glory for eternity. This is the end, to which our souls constantly aspire; for this is the end, out of which it is not possible for them to be happy.

Our souls are the living and animated images of God himself; they are signed with the light of his divine countenance. By the grace of adoption they even partake of the divine nature, according to the expression of St. Peter,* they are therefore in a restless state, till they rest in God, the center of their life and happiness. Conscious of the noble dignity, to which God has raised them, they wait with longing expectation for admittance into the joy of their Lord, into the eternal sanctuary of bliss, into the unchangeable abode of Saints and Angels, into the everlasting kingdom, which a God of infinite power and glory has prepared for his chosen friends. Let us conceive, if we can, whatever that kingdom contains, great and ineffable; the depth of its riches, the height of its glory, the extent of its joys, the eternity of its duration.

What ecstasy, what raptures shall we feel, when entering into possession of that blessed kingdom we shall see the king of glory presenting himself to our view, sitting upon his throne, and unfolding to us all the charms of the beatific vision in full splendour?

* 2 Peter i.

splendour? The veil of mortality, which now conceals him from our sight, shall be then removed; we shall see him face to face, as St. Paul tells us,* we now know him only in part, but then we shall know him perfectly, even as ourselves are known. Yes, my Brethren, we shall then perfectly possess God, and in God the plenitude of all good without the mixture of any evil: in God we shall possess the plenitude of glory without measure, the plenitude of joy without grief, the plenitude of peace without fear, the plenitude of happiness without end. That is to say, our souls in possessing God shall be eternally replenished with more delights, more joy, and more happiness, than the most capacious heart of man can conceive or desire.

Then shall the tear of affliction be for ever wiped from their eyes; no sorrowful sigh, nor moan shall be heard; † no longer shall they stand in need of the sun for their light by day, or of the moon by night: for the splendour of God himself shall be unto them for an everlasting light, ‡ and the brightness of his glory shall make it one unclouded and one eternal day. Immersed in the rays of his divinity, they shall be clothed with the glory of God himself, and like stars they shall shine through all eternity. § Fixed in the contemplation of his adorable perfections they shall for ever drink of the plenteous bliss, which flows || like a torrent of purest chrysal from the throne of God. They shall be

* 1 Cor. xiii. † Rev. xxi. ‡ Isaiah lx. § Dan. xii. || Rev. xxii.

be always fatiated, but never cloyed ; always desiring an always enjoying the full completion of their desires ; always delighted, and always drawing fresh transports of delight from the living fountain of felicity itself. Such are the images of celestial happiness, as they are exhibited to us in the inspired writings ; they are sublime, they are rich, they are inviting. But as they are taken from material objects, and drawn in such colours, as are requisite to render them palpable to our senses, the idea they convey, however high it may seem, falls far below the real excellence of the objects they represent. For the joys of heaven are too spiritual, too pure and transcendent to be understood by us, as they are in themselves, or to be fully manifested by the figurative help of description. St. Paul had been rapt to the third heaven,* whether in body or out of the body he knows not, but there he learnt such hidden truths, as it is not possible for man to utter. For no eye has seen, says he, and no ear has heard,† neither can any man in this world conceive, what God has prepared for him in the next.

The suffering Christian here feels himself exceedingly comforted at the thought ; he forgets his griefs, and though worn with pains and labour, he rejoices in the hope, that he shall be one day no less happy in body than in soul. For the same Apostle assures us, that these our feeble bodies will
be

* 2 Cor. xii. † 1 Cor. 2.

be also glorified in heaven. By nature, says he,* we are mortal, and subject to corruption, but at the last day in the general resurrection of the dead we shall rise incorruptible and immortal. We have sown in dishonour, but we shall rise in glory; we have sown in weakness, but we shall rise in strength. For this our corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this our mortal body shall put on immortality; so that it shall become a spiritual body endued with the same shining qualities, that adorn the glorified body of Jesus Christ himself. In this last and glorious exaltation of man from earth to heaven will be literally verified the words of the royal Prophet,† when he says, that God has displayed his magnificence above the highest heavens, that he has exalted man above all his works, that he has raised him to a state little inferiour to that of Angels, that he has crowned him in fine with honour and everlasting glory.

This, my Brethren, is the supreme beatitude of man; this is the happy end of God's elect. In the bosom of his divinity, as in their center of happiness, they eternally repose, having no other employ than to enjoy their happiness, and to sing the praises of their munificent Creator for ages evermore. This is the noble and exalted end, for which we have all and each one of us been created. This is the end, we should always keep in view; to this every other project ought to be subordinate,

* 1 Cor. xv. † Psalm viii.

nate, because on this our eternal welfare entirely depends, and without it nothing but endless horrors can ensue: this will last when all our worldly hopes shall fail; this will for ever flourish, after heaven and earth and even time itself shall have passed away. Let us then attentively consider, and in our most recollected thoughts ponder well the excellency of this our end, and we shall learn to esteem it: let us dive into the depth of its treasures, and we shall labour to attain it.

Ist. Let us consider the excellency of our last end. The excellency of the end, we are made for, it is to be estimated from the sublimity of its object, from the transcendency of its joys, from the extent of its duration. Its object is the supreme and incomprehensible felicity of an all-perfect God: its joys are one continued torrent of delights, which flow from the beatific vision of a God unfolding himself to his dearest creatures, in all the charms of infinite beauty, splendour and magnificence: its duration is no other than the boundless eternity of a God, immutable and immense in the nature of his existence. This, my Brethren, is the kingdom of everlasting glory, the happy region of the living, and by excellence the joy of the Lord, as it is called by our blessed Saviour,* and therefore compared to a precious jewel and a hidden treasure. It is called a treasure, because it comprises within its bosom all, that is precious to the
 soul

* Matt. xiii.

soul of man ; and it is a hidden treasure, because at present it lies concealed from our corporeal eyes, and is known only to few by the light of faith.

We, my Brethren, are of the happy few, to whom this heavenly treasure has been revealed. Great is its value ; the treasures even of the whole world are no more than a few grains of sand in comparison of it. For what will it profit a man, says our blessed Saviour,* to gain the whole world, should he by the bargain lose his soul, or what could he receive in exchange to compensate his loss ? Can a fleeting shadow hold the place of real good, or can time ever equal eternity ? Did riches, pleasures, dignities or honours ever bring, or can they bring certain happiness along with them ? Yet how many Christians in the world unfortunately seek no other ? Blind delusion ! They seek for happiness, where it never can be found, and they seek it not, where it is only to be found. Are ye not, dear Christians, a part of the deluded number ? Has not example, vanity, or passion drawn you out of the path of virtue ? O call to mind, what lights, what graces, what instructions you have received ; and consider how little consonant with reason your conduct must appear, if notwithstanding that, you run with the infatuated children of the world after vanities, and weary yourselves in the toilsome round of unprofitable and sinful pursuits. For in effect what are your earthly views, which so engage and agitate your minds, what

* Mat. xvi.

what are they but vanity, since they have nothing solid and nothing lasting in them? What are they but deceitful vanity, since instead of leading you to the seat of happiness they draw you by false appearances to a greater distance from it? No, my Brethren, it is not for this world, that God has made us: if he had, he never would have stamp'd upon us the image of himself. In the world all is perishable, we ourselves are but strangers and pilgrims in it: there is nothing sufficiently great on earth to content and make us happy. All earthly enjoyments are too short, too carnal, and too imperfect to satisfy a spiritual and immortal soul. We are made for heaven.

2dly. Therefore let us turn our views to those eternal mansions, where the only treasures are, that can equal our desires, and content our soul, because they are the treasures, that will never fail.* They are the treasures of everlasting life, which our heavenly Father has stored up for us in the treasury of heaven, and which upon our entrance there he will pour into our bosom without end or measure; treasures incorruptible and immense, which no rust shall tarnish, no moth devour, and no thief ever steal away.† To a participation of these inestimable riches God has called us from the very first moment he created us. Between the unbounded majesty of God and the littleness of
man

* Luke xii.

† Mat. vi.

man infinite was the distance; but that we might approach him, as near as our nature would admit, he breathed into us a soul,* which he then destined to a supernatural state of glory, and prepared for us a throne within the very sanctuary of his heavenly kingdom. He at the same time infused into our soul an instinctive knowledge of the sublime end, for which he had ordained us, and impressed us with a fond desire of being united to it. For there is our treasure; and where our treasure is, there also will be our heart.†

All things follow the natural tendency, that was impressed upon them in their first creation. Earthly bodies tend towards the center of the earth, fire rapidly ascends towards the sphere of heaven, our souls by a similar impulse tend to God, the sphere and center of their repose. During this our mortal life we discover no more of God, than is sufficient to stimulate that inbred desire we have of being hereafter united to him in his glory. At present the splendour of his divinity is hidden from our sight, it gleams, as it were, through a cloud from afar, and we only know it by the rays it spreads upon the beautiful works of the creation. But when the bright day of eternity shall shine upon us, and heaven shall open its treasures to our view, then shall we behold, then shall we know and possess our God, as he is in his plenitude of glory. Then will the plenitude of

* Gen. ii.

† Mat. vi.

of his power beam out upon us, because we shall be exalted to a sublimity of bliss, which human nature by its own powers never could have risen to. Then will the splendour of his wisdom be transfused into us, because in him, as in a perfect mirror, we shall clearly see and know all things. Then will the plenitude of his magnificence be communicated to us, because in the affluence of his kingdom, we shall rejoice, as in a boundless ocean of delights. Then will his goodness, his mercy, his sanctity, his love, and all his infinite perfections concur to our happiness, because from the inexhaustible treasures of his divinity we shall be replenished with the perfection of all good. His joy will be our joy, his peace will be our peace, his riches will be ours, his kingdom and his happiness will be also ours : so that, as St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians,* God will be all in all, he will reign in us, and we in him for ever and ever. Wherefore know thy dignity, O man, cries out the great and eloquent doctor St. Leo, and since thou art made partaker of the divine nature, be careful not to disgrace it by acting in any manner unworthy of thyself and God.

Therefore not content with a general and ineffectual desire, such as most Christians feel of being happy, let us proceed to facts, and by steady virtue let us strive to gain our last end, in which only few succeed. For of the many, who are called

* C. xv.

led, only few are chosen.* In this point it is of consequence to remember, that we have not only an eternity of happiness to acquire, but an eternity of misery likewise to escape. Were a state of insensibility or of annihilation the only consequence of our losing God, all then would end with us in the grave, and after death we should have nothing more to enjoy, nothing more to fear, or to hope for. But even in that case unpardonable would be our folly to resign our title to heaven for a trifle, for a meer nothing. Great was the foolishness of Esau,† to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage: but greater would be ours to exchange eternal joys for a moment's pleasure, an everlasting substance for a fleeting shadow.

But since our souls are immortal and destined to exist for ever, we cannot now fail of being happy without being positively miserable. For at the same time that our blessed Saviour promises everlasting life to those, who do good things‡, he announces likewise everlasting punishment to those, who do evil things, and die guilty of them. Having then so much at stake, so much to gain and so much to lose, such happiness to hope for, and such pains to fear, no endeavours surely can be deemed superfluous to secure success. For we must fight and conquer too, before we can be crowned.

Straight

* Mat. xx.

† Gen. xxv.

‡ John v.

Straight moreover is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life,* you must therefore strive to enter, says our blessed Saviour. For the kingdom of heaven is not granted to every one, who says, Lord, Lord, but to him only that does the will of God, who is in heaven. The will of God is, that we keep his commandments. Our divine Master therefore teaches us,† that to follow him, and to enter with him into life, we must take up our cross and deny ourselves. To take up our cross, what is it, my Brethren, but patiently to bear the afflictions of life, to submit to persecution, to injuries and affronts for Christ's sake, and cheerfully to undergo the occasional labours and inconveniences, which the duties of our Christian profession must sometimes put us to? To deny ourselves, what is it, but to reject those forbidden objects, those gratifications of our passions, and those dangerous occasions of sin, which are incompatible with our obligations to God?

Corrupt nature may perchance reply, the world will cry aloud, and false friends may suggest, that such a system in practice would render life very uncomfortable and gloomy.

The objection, my Brethren, is a meer illusion, first invented by the enemy of our salvation, and then adopted by a false philosophy to discourage virtue, and embolden vice. For a system, which
has

* Mat. vii.

† Mat. xvi.

has been established by the Wisdom of God himself, cannot be either so uncomfortable or so gloomy, as the world would make it. For though it enjoins a strict obedience to the commands of God, yet it neither forbids a rational use of innocent amusements, nor excludes the cheerful comforts of social life. By the graces which accompany the evidence of a pure and upright conscience, its yoke is rendered sweet, and its burden light. The system is no other, than what we all embraced at baptism, and promised to observe to our latest breath; it has the promise of eternal life for its reward. Blessed are the clean of heart, says Jesus Christ,* for they shall see God; blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy; blessed are they, who thirst after goodness, for they shall be satiated; blessed are the poor in spirit, and they, who suffer for justice sake, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. These are comfortable assurances, these are cheering tidings to all, who feel themselves any ways burdened or oppressed.

The followers of the world in their temporal pursuits have no such promises to trust to; and yet to gain their earthly ends they cheerfully undertake more painful labours, than are usually required to gain heaven. What fatigues and dangers does the soldier and seaman undergo? What servile attendance and inconveniences must the courtier submit to? What continual sacrifices of time, of ease and sleep, and frequently even of health

* Mat. v.

health and fortune are they also obliged to make who wish to gain the good graces of the world? Of these the world speaks, and these the world approves; because the world loves its own, as St. John tells us.* But shall Christians, shall the professed followers of Jesus Christ adopt the same sentiments and language? Shall they presume to censure and rebuke their best and nearest friends for exerting the same zeal from a principle of duty, to serve God, as others do from habit to serve the world? St. Paul, who was certainly guided by the Spirit of God, speaks a very different language.† From the example of those, who were candidates for popular applause, he takes occasion to exhort the Christians of Corinth to exert a similar zeal for the salvation of their souls. They, who contend in the public games, says he, refrain from every thing, that may be hurtful to them; and yet it is but a corruptible crown they contend for, whereas ours is an incorruptible one. Since ye have therefore entered the race, stretch forward with a holy emulation, and so run, that ye may gain the prize.

For a further encouragement to our exertions in the course of virtue we are moreover to reflect, that in the service of Almighty God there is nothing lost, nothing unrewarded. Not so much as a single hair of our head shall perish. For our heavenly Father‡ beholds every step we take,

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every

* C. xv.

† 1 Cor. ix.

‡ Mat. vi.

every wish we form, every effort we make to serve him, and will reward us for it: for being a just judge, he will give to each one according to his works.* In the same proportion, as we measure out to him, he will in return measure out to us again.† And what is the measure he will give? A more enlightened knowledge of himself, a more perfect sight of his incomprehensible perfections, a more abundant communication of his heavenly treasures, a more eminent degree of glory amongst his Saints. For though all shall shine like stars, yet as one star in brightness differs from another star, says St. Paul, ‡ so shall the glorified bodies of the Elect rise in a different degree of glory according to each one's personal deserts. Powerful, my Brethren, is the motive, and great is the incitement we here have to honour God with a generous heart, to serve him with a cheerful heart, and to love him with our whole heart.

Great God, since thou hast been pleased to create us for thyself, O grant we may always seek thee; and as thou art our beginning, our last and only end, so mayest thou always be the first object of our thoughts, the pure motive of our actions, and the only term of our desires. Thou hast made us for an end the most sublime, the most happy, and divine. That we may obtain this end, thou hast furnished us with means the most efficacious, that thy wisdom could devise, or thy
power

* Mat. xvi.

† C. vii.

‡ I Cor. xv.

power execute: thou hast given us a soul and body to know and do thy will; thou hast made the universe to serve us, thou hast descended in Person upon the earth to instruct us, thou hast died upon a cross to save us, thou hast risen from the grave, and ascended into heaven to encourage us. O never suffer us to be either unmindful of thy past favours, or unworthy of thy future mercies! Strengthen us, O Lord, in our purposes to serve thee, and by the holy grace help us on in our way towards thee: increase our faith that we may know thee, enliven our hope, that we may seek thee, inflame our love, that we may find thee: that when the labours of this our mortal pilgrimage shall end, we may finally rest in thee, and with thy elect Eternally possess, adore, and praise thee in thy glory. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XIV.

UPON THE SAINTS OF GOD.

Praise ye the Lord in his Saints. Psalm. cl.

GOD is wonderful in his attributes; he is wonderful in all his works. God is also wonderful in his Saints.* The prodigies and wonders he has been pleased to work by their hands, and the operations of his holy grace, which he has so eminently displayed in their shining virtues, justly excite our admiration, and equally claim our praise. The testimony of holy writ leaves us no room to doubt of the miracles wrought by the Saints of the ancient law. The New Testament recounts the stupendous miracles wrought by the Apostles and first Disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself declares † that they, who believe in him, shall be privileged with the grace of performing such miraculous works, as he had done, and even greater than any he had done.

These

* Psalm lxxvii.

† John c. xiv

These singular privileges, thus granted to the Saints, mark not only the favour but the power also they enjoy with their Creator. To me, O God, are thy friends exceedingly honourable, says the Psalmist,* their principality is exceedingly strengthened, their numbers surpass even the sands of the sea.

How glorious my Brethren, is the heavenly kingdom, wherein the Saints reign with Christ, and partake with Christ of the glory, that issues from the unbounded splendour of God, which is revealed in them! Lift up your thoughts, and in imagination behold the interior court of heaven open to your view. Behold the Lord of Hosts, as he was seen by Isaiah,† sitting upon a sublime and elevated throne, filling the whole extent of heaven with the brightness of his glory. Around him millions and millions of blessed Spirits attend with profound reverence to honour his supreme dominion over all creatures, and to carry his adorable mandates to the uttermost bounds of the creation. Behold the innumerable host of Apostles, of Martyrs, of Confessors, of Virgins and other Saints, all clothed with resplendent robes of immortality, and distinguished by the brightness of their respective virtues, all crowned with glory, and all shining like the sun‡ in the sight of God. These were once pilgrims upon earth like ourselves, once engaged in the same service; once

fighting

* Psalm cxxxviii.

† C. vi.

‡ Mat. xiii.

fighting under the same banner, and hoping for the same crown. These are they, says St. John,* who are come out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God in everlasting bliss, and He, that sitteth upon the throne, shall dwell among them. They now rest from their labours, they reign with Christ for ever in glory, they are the chosen favourites and friends of God in his heavenly kingdom. They are likewise our friends and brethren in Christ; they are members with us of the same Church of Christ, and are in communion with us. This communion we profess, as often as we recite the Apostle's creed. They have received the crown, which we are striving for; they are in possession of the happiness, which we hope for. And as they know their happiness and still remember the struggles they underwent to obtain it, the charity they have for us their brethren and fellow servants here below, must naturally prompt them to wish us the same happiness. They therefore intercede with the Father of mercies for us, that through the merits of his Son Jesus our only Redeemer he will grant us his efficacious helps of salvation. For since they partake of the beatific vision, their love of God is become more inflamed and more perfect: consequently their zeal for his holy service among men, and their charity for their neighbours still labouring on earth, must in
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* Rev. vii.

the same proportion be also increased and perfected. When on earth they were eminent in sanctity; in heaven they are now raised to an eminent degree of glory, the reward of their virtues. Their example points out the virtues we are to practise, each one in his own line of life, and their glory raises our expectation of being one day happy with them in a participation of the same crown. The Saints are therefore worthy of imitation and veneration.

By veneration I understand honour and respect. Men in dignity and power claim respect from their fellow creatures; Sovereigns claim due honour from their subjects. Such is the dictate of right reason, sanctioned by law in every well-ordered government. This honour and respect is exhibited by such outward tokens as usage and good order has established. A disrespect or an insult offered to the King's friend, whom he wishes to honour, is usually thought to be offered to the King himself. Now the Saints, as has already been observed, are the chosen friends the select favourites and honoured courtiers of the King of heaven; honour therefore and respect is their due on that account.

But when I say honour, I mean with the holy Catholic Church a relative and inferiour honour, such as may be paid to the friends of God without lessening the honour due to God. The honour

nour due to God is sovereign and independent, because God is the sovereign and independent Lord of all things. This honour is expressed by the act of religious sacrifice, which is solely consecrated to the worship of the Divinity. The honour we pay the Saints is a limited and dependent honour, because however great they may be in heaven, they are still limited in their mode of existence, and however rich they may be in glory, yet they possess nothing but what they have received from God through the merits of Jesus Christ their Redeemer. This honour is shown to the Saints, when we beg their prayers in our necessities, when we implore their patronage and powerful intercession in our behalf, with God their Lord and our Lord. This inferior, this limited and relative honour has been paid to the Saints in heaven by the Church militant on earth from the early and purest times of Christianity, as a learned Protestant Divine ingenuously confesses.* “ It is confessed, says he, that the lights both of the
 “ Greek and Latin Church, S. Basil, S. Gregory Nazienzen, S. Gregory Nyssen, S. Am-
 “ brose, S. Jerom, S. Austin, S. Chrysoftom, S.
 “ Cyril of Jerufalem, S. Cyril of Alexandria,
 “ Theodoret, S. Fulgentius, S. Gregory the Great,
 “ S. Leo, and more, or rather all, after that time,
 “ have spoken to the Saints and desired their as-
 “ sistance.”

To

* Mr. THORNDIKE, in Epil. p. 3.

To desire the prayers of the Saints in heaven is certainly no less consistent with Christian piety, than to ask the prayers of the faithful upon earth. St. Paul asked the prayers of the Thessalonians.* To address God in holy prayer is undoubtedly a religious and meritorious act, and to address him in favour of those, who stand in need of his divine assistance, is moreover a charitable act. Now when we desire the Saints to pray for us, we desire nothing more, than that they will exert this charitable, this religious and meritorious act in our behalf. By such an invocation of the Saints to join with us in devout prayer before the throne of mercy, so far are we from lessening the honour due to God, that we even magnify it the more. We petition nothing independent of the divine will, we desire nothing of them, but what we and they humbly ask of the Father of lights,† from whom every good gift and every perfect gift is to come. We indeed honour the Saints by addressing ourselves to them for their patronage in our wants, but that honour is ultimately referred to God, whom we praise and honour in his Saints.

To the Saints, as members of the same Church, it is still said, ask and you shall receive.‡ The great things they have done in the divine service, the labours they have undertaken, the conflicts they

* 1 Ep. c. v.

† James c. i.

‡ Mat. c. vii.

they endured, the victories they won, and the virtues they practised, give them a title to ask and to receive. For themselves they have nothing more to ask. They possess all they wish. They possess God, they are happy, they are satiated with glory. They ask then for us. When called upon they offer their petitions solely for us, whom they ardently desire to see partakers with them in the same happiness and the same glory. St. James assures us,* that the assiduous prayer of a just man availeth much. How much more efficacious will be the united prayers of the blessed in heaven? At their request a more easy access will be open for us to the fountain of all good, which had otherwise remained shut against us. Unprofitable servants at the best, and often unworthy to be heard by reason of our numerous offences against God, we naturally look round and apply to such mediators as are qualified and willing to intercede for us. With this view we often recommend ourselves to the prayers of our friends and brethren here below. Can their prayers be less efficacious, or their charity less active, when translated to a state of perfect happiness? By such a translation can the sense of feeling for others, or the desire of relieving others in their miseries be extinguished in them? If the Apostles and Martyrs could pray for others, says St. Jerom,† when in their mortal state they were solicitous for themselves, how much more ready will they now be, when crowned with victory and triumph? Moses‡

by

* C. v.

† Adv. Vigil.

‡ Exod. xxxii.

by his prayers obtained pardon for six hundred thousand seditious Israelites: Stephen the first Martyr in imitation of his Lord interceded for his persecutors:* and shall their prayers be less efficacious, when they are now reigning with Christ in his kingdom? St. Paul affirms, that the two hundred and seventy-six men, who sailed with him, were saved from shipwreck on his account: † and now since he is dissolved and glorified with Christ, is he to close his mouth for ever, and not to open his lips for those innumerable souls, who by his preaching have embraced the Christian faith? Eliphaz the Themanite and his two friends had sinned against God; they offered sacrifice in atonement for the offence. But neither their sacrifice nor their prayer could find acceptance without the intercession of holy Job. ‡ Job prayed for his friends and obtained their pardon. In the book of Zachary || is recorded the Angel's prayer for Jerusalem and the cities of Juda. Michael the Archangel, as we find in the Book of Daniel, § exerted his tutelary power in behalf of the captive Jews, and while the good Tobias ¶ prayed and buried the dead, his prayer was presented to the Lord by Raphael, one of the seven Spirits, who assist before the throne of God. Hence in the Revelations it is said,** that the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the Angel's hand. St. Peter being in prison, and the faithful praying for his deliv-

rance,

* Acts vii. † Acts xxvii. ‡ Job xliii. || C. i. § C. x. ¶ C. xii.
 ** C. viii.

rance, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles,* Almighty God was pleased to hear their prayer, but it was by the ministry of an Angel, that the prison gate was opened, and the Apostle delivered from his chains.

Such being the evidence of holy writ on this subject, is it possible to doubt, whether the Angels and Saints in heaven interest themselves or not about the welfare of their brethren on earth? Whether they know what passes here below, or can be made acquainted with our wants? The joy, expressed in heaven† upon the conversion of a sinner from his evil ways, leaves no room for any such doubt. For no one can rejoice at an event, which he knows nothing of. The Blessed in heaven therefore know our wants, and are ready to solicit at the throne of mercy for our relief. It is our interest then to invoke their patronage. They are happy favourites of the most high God, they are our natural advocates. To the Angels God has given a commission‡ to watch over and to guard us from harm. It is our duty then to place a confidence in them. They are the holy, they are the living and glorified images of Almighty God himself; they are therefore entitled to a due respect and veneration from us. God has made them worthy of respect by exalting them to glory; he has made them worthy of veneration by connecting them so closely with himself. They are sanctified

* C. xii. † Luke c. xv. ‡ Psalm xc.

sanctified with his sanctity, they are glorified with his glory, they are immortal with his immortality. He has chosen them from amongst thousands to reign with him for ever in heaven, they are his heirs by adoption and the co-heirs of Jesus Christ in his kingdom of glory. He therefore cannot be indifferent to the respect or the disrespect they meet with from their fellow-creatures. In honouring the Saints, as has been explained, we honour God himself; in desiring the Saints to pray for us, as all Catholics do, we desire them to give the homage due to God, and in giving it to remember us.

Wherefore lift up your hearts, my Brethren, to the heavenly mansions, and with the Psalmist praise the Lord in his Saints. Praise his bounty in the treasures of his graces communicated to them; praise his sanctity in their holiness of life; praise his power in their gift of miracles; praise his justice in their crowns of glory. The Saints in the order of grace had received great talents from their munificent Creator, and by a steady attention to their Christian duties they have improved those talents to their everlasting glory. To the gifts of the Holy Ghost infused in their souls they added the brightest virtues; by co-operating with the grace of their divine Redeemer they persisted faithful to their trust, they fought a good fight, they finished their glorious course, and thereby deserved the crown they now possess. In them the grace
of

of Jesus Christ has continued through every age to triumph over the Prince of darkness. Drawn by the sweet attractives of divine love, the white-robed train of Virgins renounced the soft allurements of flesh and blood, while the bold champions of religion stood in defiance of the severest attacks, that the powers of error could make against their faith. Under the direction of the holy Spirit millions of devout Christians have left the world to follow the evangelical counsels of voluntary poverty, chastity and obedience in a religious state; freely renouncing every worldly interest, that birth or fortune might entitle them to expect, they addicted themselves to the penitential rigours of an obscure, of a frugal and humble life. By a licentious or an unbelieving world these have commonly been held up as the objects of pity and ridicule,* and their mode of life has been deemed a folly. But behold how they are counted† by true Wisdom among the sons of God, and among the Saints is their happy lot. Thus far we praise, admire and venerate. Let us now consider what we are to imitate.

Churches in every part of the Christian world have been erected to the living God, but they are erected under the patronage of some favourite Saint. The Church has instituted various festivals in honour of the Saints during the course of the year, and commanded them to be kept holy. The intention of these religious institutions is not merely

* Wisdom c. v. † Ibid.

ly to commemorate the names of the Saints, to implore their patronage, or to give God thanks for their glory, it is moreover to excite the faithful to an imitation of their virtues. A bare rehearsal of the graces they received, or of the wonders they wrought, a barren speculation of the merit they acquired, or of the glory they possess would avail us little, unless we should at the same time be roused up to a holy emulation of imitating their virtues. For the Saints are the models of true virtue; on earth they were the masters of Christian perfection, the shining ornaments of religion. Their time of probation is now over; they are in full possession of their reward in heaven. Their labours are at an end, they have gloriously finished their career, they are now at rest, eternal light shines upon them.

We, my Brethren, are still in our mortal pilgrimage, struggling for victory in the midst of difficulties and perils. We have perils from the world and from false brethren; we have difficulties from our weak selves as well as from the duties we have to perform. But these difficulties and perils are no other, than what the Saints have had before us. For it cannot be imagined, that the Saints were exempt from the weakness peculiar to human nature, or that they had no struggles to undergo, and no difficulties to encounter in the practice of virtue. If such had been their condition, where would have been their victory, where
would

would have been the merit of their patience, or of their fidelity to God? For where we have nothing to overcome, there can be no victory: where we have nothing to suffer, there can be no occasion for patience. No, my Brethren: the way of virtue must necessarily appear to every child of Adam more or less rough and thorny. Grace alone and the habit of doing good can render it smooth and pleasant. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, says Christ,* and they who offer violence bear it away. Narrow is the gate, and strait the way, which leads to life.† Without force and struggle no man can enter there. By such pious violence the Saints opened to themselves a passage, and pressed forward into life. For there is no ground to suppose, that the laws of the Gospel were relaxed, or that the nature of things was altered in their favour; that the devil had no power to molest, that the world had no blandishments to tempt, and concupiscence no sting to hurt them. We need but open the history of their lives, and we shall find them men made of flesh and blood like ourselves, equally susceptible of pain and pleasure, equally liable to the impressions of joy and grief, equally subject to the common infirmities of human nature. Many of them had strong passions to subdue, great contradictions to undergo, stubborn difficulties to remove, long and troublesome temptations to struggle with. Many of them lived in the midst of a perverse world, where they were
equally

* Mat. xi. † C. vii.

equally to guard against the alluring smiles of seduction, and to withstand the frowns of persecution, slander and oppression. Contempt, ridicule and reproach were employed by turns either to expose their simplicity to the laughter of a false philosophy, or to shake their constancy in the practice of their religion.

But because they were agreeable to God, and their steady principle of duty rendered them greatly so, it was necessary, as the Angel told Tobias,* that temptation should prove and perfect them. Aided by divine grace they persevered and conquered. Well grounded in the principles of faith, and warm with the hope of everlasting life, they were ever studious to serve the God, who made them; and ever zealous to fulfil all, that he commanded them. Not a single tittle of the law they knew could be overlooked, but that the whole and every part of it must be faithfully and punctually accomplished. In theory and practice they knew it to be impossible to serve two masters, and to divide their heart between the world and God. For God had commanded them, as he commands us, to love him with the whole heart. With all their heart they therefore sought to serve and please him in all they did. All the affections of their heart breathed his honour, and every undertaking was levelled at his greater glory. By diligent and fervent prayer each day was consecrated to God,

whilst their turn of mind and the general conduct of their lives was formed upon the maxims and guided by the spirit of the Gospel. Humility, meekness, purity of body and mind, charity, patience, benevolence, in a word every gospel virtue crouded in to form their Christian character. Such, my Brethren, is the example they have left us, such is the pattern they have drawn for our imitation. For we have the same glorious end to pursue, if we wish to be eternally happy; we serve the same God, we have the same precepts to fulfil, the same duties to perform, the same Gospel to follow. We have in fine nothing more to do, than what the grace of God, if we are only in earnest, enables us to do, nothing but what men like ourselves and in the same circumstances of life have already done.

For in every station and in every condition of life there have been persons eminent for their holiness and purity of manners. Through every rank of age and sex from the cottage to the throne, thousands have shone, and by their bright example have displayed the specific virtues, that adorn and sanctify each state. For sanctity excludes no person whether married or single, it excludes neither poverty nor wealth, neither servitude nor power, neither infirmity nor strength: it is annexed to the ordinary duties of a Christian life. There needs no change of state to seek the means of sanctity. For the beauty as well as for the support of civil society
different

different degrees and ranks are necessary; yet each one in his rank is called unto holiness, says the Apostle,* because such is the will of God, who gives us all the graces necessary to accomplish it. Of the Saints some have been called to an active, others to a contemplative life. Some have sanctified their souls, while they served the state; some by their temperate and beneficent use of riches have edified the world in the midst of plenty, while others have relinquished all they had in the world to follow Christ more perfectly. Some directed all their study to the sanctification of their own souls only in solitude and religious retirement, while others in imitation of the Apostles, have exerted themselves for the sanctification likewise of others by preaching and teaching. But in this they all concurred, that charity is the bond of perfection, and that there can be no true sanctity, where the observance of the whole Evangelical law is not complete. For whoever breaks but one of the commandments,§ says our blessed Saviour, although he should observe all the rest,|| he will have no place in the kingdom of heaven. No pride, no lust, no intemperance, no impurity, no revenge, no injustice, no sloth, nor any other vice whatever, however palliated it may seem by a glare of blended virtues in the same character, can find admittance there. One single blemish is enough to spoil the finest painting; the deficiency of a sin-

S 2

gle

* 1 Thess. c. iv.

§ Mat. v.

|| James c. 2.

gle link breaks the golden chain of perfection and renders the whole imperfect.

The Saints therefore are perfect models for our imitation, because without the mixture of any vice they shine with the pure strays of religious virtues. By a strict attention to themselves on all occasions, by shunning all dangerous commerce with a sinful world, by pious austerities and rigid self-denials, many have preserved their baptismal innocence without a blemish, and have thereby left us the example of integrity and penance united together. Such was the Baptist, such were his parents Zachary and Elizabeth.* Many, after having been seduced by the allurements of sin, or betrayed by passion, have risen more glorious from their fall. By a sincere conversion of their hearts to God, by the tears of true repentance, by the means of mortification and penance, they have expiated their former crimes, and become more conspicuous for their virtues, than they had been noted for their errors. Such is Magdalen, such is Peter and St. Paul. Paul from being a violent persecutor became a zealous Apostle. Peter had the weakness to deny his divine Master. With bitter tears he bewailed his sin, and for his fervent faith deserved to have the whole flock of Christ committed to his charge. * Magdalen had yielded to the most wanton excesses of corrupt nature. She bathed the feet of
Jesus

* Luke i. † John c. xxi.

Jesus Christ with her tears, and on account of her great love of God, great sins were forgiven her. §

Christian, if you have sinned, and by sinning have forfeited the love of your Creator, look up to the Saints, and you will find amongst them many examples of true repentance, many claiming your notice and imitation. To have sinned was once also their misfortune, the gush of passion and effect of human weakness. To repent sincerely of their sins was their glory, the fruit of holy prayer, and the triumph of divine grace. By their example you will learn to rise from your fall, to walk on steadily in the path of virtue, and not to fall again. By their example you will learn to abhor the guilt, to renounce the habit, and to shun the occasions of sin. By their example you will learn to use the arms of penance, to subdue your passions, to curb the sallies of rebellious nature, to be zealous in your Christian duties, to persevere in the exercise of a well-regulated piety, and to sanctify your souls. Implore their patronage, copy their virtues. By experience they know the difficulties you labour under : they once felt them. They are ready, they are active to assist you by their prayers before the common Father of Mankind. They know what it is to see God, to possess God, and to enjoy God in the plenitude of his glory. They ardently wish to have their
friends

friends, their brethren and fellow Christians partners with them in the same glory.

Wherefore rouse, my Brethren; and ye that sleep, rise from the dead, as the Apostle admonishes,* and Christ will enlighten you. Tread the footsteps of the wise, who are gone before you. Be ye also wise unto salvation, and by redoubling your diligence in the practice of good works redeem the precious time you have unfortunately lost. Death will soon come, when time for you will be no more. At the close of a virtuous life happy will be the death, that shall open to you a free passage into that blessed kingdom, where you may see and love, and praise and rejoice, for ever and ever.

* Eph. c. v.

END OF VOL. I.

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

UPON THE DIVINITY AND

Wonderful Works of Jesus Christ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH REEVE.

VOL. II.

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however caught the idle curiosity of some and gained the attention of others. The evil, like a canker, spread by degrees, and corrupted the faith of many. Warm disputes consequently arose, the peace of the Church was disturbed and the State alarmed. With a view of stopping the growing evil the Bishops were summoned from every part of Christendom to a general council,* which was held at Nice the capital of Bithynia. There the principles of primitive belief were diligently and candidly discussed, the doctrine of Arius was declared to be heretical, and the consubstantiality of the Son with the eternal Father was solemnly defined.

This solemn definition of the Church assembled in its Pastors, although it gave a mortal wound to the Arian heresy, did not put an end to the Arian faction. For nothing is perhaps so flattering to human vanity, or so congenial with the dictates of a corrupt heart, as to head a party against lawful authority. Arianism had for many years great names and powerful numbers for its support, till after many convulsive struggles it wasted away by degrees, and sunk at last forgotten by the world into its original obscurity. There had it rested to the end of time, if a licentious spirit of speaking and writing in contempt of all authority had not attempted in these latter days to draw forth the monster into light again under another shape, not less formidable than hideous.

Unitarianism,

* An. 325.

Unitarianism, as it is called, under the delusive and flimsy disguise of doing honour to the one, supreme and eternal God, has dared to insult, to attack and deny the divine nature of his only begotten Son, as well as of his holy Spirit. This is to impugn God in his very essence; this is to contradict the wonderful fecundity of his divine nature without understanding it; in a word it is to efface the idea of incomprehensible perfection from the supreme Being. Because the human mind is too narrow to comprehend the manner how the Father communicates his whole nature and substance to the Son, so as to constitute a second Person, and how the Father and the Son concur in communicating the same indivisible nature to the holy Ghost, so as to constitute a third Person in the unity of the Godhead, shall man impotently presume to dispute the reality? Man undoubtedly feels within himself a capacity of thinking; but because he knows not how a thought is formed, will he therefore deny the existence of thought within him? Will, memory and understanding are three distinct faculties of the same individual soul. But after what manner the soul exercises those faculties, or how she produces her various operations of the mind, the philosopher is at a loss to tell. Would it then be wise in him to deny those operations, because he can neither explain nor see, how they are formed; This likeness, which man bears within his soul, of the Divinity

is but an imperfect likeness : it has however something in it too great for man to comprehend. Shall man then pretend to investigate the profound mysteries of God, and in his ignorance shall he dare to pronounce a Trinity of persons in one divine nature to be impossible, because incomprehensible to his weak understanding ; It is rational, it is just and wise to submit to God. Let man learn to think, and to speak with reverence of God : let him learn to hear and humbly to believe what God has been pleased to reveal of himself and of his adorable perfections. *There are Three, who give testimony in heaven,* says St. John,* *the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* Three in Persons, One in nature. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, is an Antichrist, neither hath he the Father, who denies the Son.†

It is not my design to combat the arguments, on which the Unitarian pretends to ground his heterodox opinions. This has been done by an abler pen. My weak endeavour is to animate the piety of the faithful in the ancient belief of a fundamental article of the Christian religion, by briefly producing such testimonies, as bespeak the Divinity of Jesus Christ the author and the finisher of our faith.‡ In these perilous times, when the spirit of licentiousness and infidelity is gone forth to spread anarchy and confusion through the
Christian

* 1 Ep. c. 5.

† c. 2.

‡ Heb. xii.

Christian world, every effort to strengthen the weak, to confirm the doubtful, and to guard the unwary against the danger of seduction is seasonable and just.

In the very first age of Christianity Cerinthus of Asia Minor, a man equally corrupt in morals as in doctrine, began to dogmatise against the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The beloved disciple St. John was still living. At the request of the neighbouring Bishops he undertook to refute the heresy of the antichristian blasphemer. With this view he wrote his Epistles and Gospel about the end of the first century. In a style truly noble and sublime the inspired Evangelist takes his eagle-flight, and soaring on the wings of the holy Spirit above all that is created, mounts to the very essence of God's eternal Word. "In the beginning, says he,* was the Word, and the Word was God. "This word was in the beginning with God. "For all things were made by him, and without "him was made nothing, that has been made." The word himself therefore was not made. Before any thing was, the Word was, else the things, that are, could not have been made by him. Before the beginning of all creatures the Word had in himself a being, from whom and by whom all creatures have received existence. Consequently the Word can be no creature; for he has no beginning. His existence is eternal. For in the
beginning

* John 1.

beginning that is, before the first date of time, he was with God. He therefore is the divine, the eternal, the increated Word of God ; he is God himself.

This is the Word, that was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.* But by being made man he underwent no change in his divine nature, nor did he cease to be what he always was, the splendour of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance.† For although he took upon himself a new form by assuming the form of man, yet he lost nothing of the form of God, which he necessarily had before all ages. But in his bodily appearance he divested himself of all the marks of his divinity by taking the form of a servant : yet still being, as he had always been, in the form of God, he thought it no robbery, as St. Paul expresses it,‡ to be himself equal to God. For the form of God was essentially his own. The Apostle by his manner of associating the divine and human form of Jesus Christ in the same sentence seems clearly to evince, that as by the latter he was truly man, so by the first he was truly God. We know, says St. John,§ that the Son of God is come, and *this is the true God and eternal life.*

That a God eternal, immense and infinite in all perfection should ever stoop so low as to become incarnate is a mystery far above the reach of human understanding. No philosophy, no learning

of

* John 1.

† Heb. 1.

‡ Phil. 2.

§ 1 Ep. c. v.

of the ancients ever could discover it: without the light of divine revelation even the chosen people of God had never known it. Without the testimony of the inspired writings, and without the exprefs declarations of the Prophets, who were sent by the most High to foretel the wonderful event for ages before it happened, the world had never been disposed to receive so divine a truth. The expiation of sin committed by man against God, and the satisfaction, that was requisite to repair the injury done to the divine honour by so heinous an offence, were of such a nature, as not to be effected by any thing less than God himself. For if the mediator of our peace had been only man, he himself would have stood in need of some other mediator to render his mediation acceptable, before he could have been either able to satisfy for the injury done by sin, or worthy to be heard in the reparation he offered for the atonement of sin. Therefore the character, which the holy Scripture gives of the promised Messiah, is more than human: it is supernatural and divine.

Adam had scarce sinned, but he was comforted with a promise from God himself, that his transgression should one day be repaired, and that the woman's offspring should hereafter crush the serpent's head.* On this divine promise the ancient Patriarchs grounded their expectation of a Redeemer, who should take away the sins of the world.

* Gen. iii.

world. To confirm this promise, as the Scriptures testify, the Prophets in succeeding ages were inspired in the utterance of their oracles concerning Him. To perpetuate this promise to the world the Jewish nation was in a special manner chosen to be the depository and faithful guardian of those sacred volumes, in which the word of God is undoubtedly contained.

“ To us a Child is born, says Isaiah,† and a Son
 “ is given to us. His name shall be called Won-
 “ derful, God, the Mighty, the Father of the
 “ world to come, the Prince of peace. For be-
 “ hold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son,
 “ and his name shall be called Emmanuel,* that
 “ is to say, God-with-us.” Out of thee, O Beth-
 “ lehem, shall he come forth unto me, that is to
 “ be the Ruler in Israel, says the Prophet Mi-
 “ cheas,§ and his going forth is from the begin-
 “ ning, from the days of eternity.” Here, my
 Brethren, is expressly foretold the birth of a won-
 derful Child, the Son of a pure Virgin. He was
 to be brought forth in the town of Bethlehem, and
 though born in time is declared to have an exist-
 ence from the days of eternity. This Child there-
 fore is likewise God; because none but God can
 exist from eternity. Isaiah styles him expressly
 God; a God in human flesh dwelling with us, and
 bringing peace unto us, our powerful Mediator
 and Redeemer. Neither the reality nor the mean-
 ing

† C. ix.

* C. vii.

§ C. v.

ing of these Prophecies can be rationally questioned by any one, who admits the ancient Scripture. To determine when and in whom they have been fulfilled, we must consult the new. For conformably to Christian belief both the old and the new Testament have been equally dictated by the same unerring spirit of God.

In the reign of Augustus Cæsar, as we learn from St. Luke;‡ Mary a Virgin of Nazareth in Judea, conceived by virtue of the holy Ghost, and in her chaste womb bore a Son without detriment to her Virginal integrity. At the end of nine months she brought him forth in the town of Bethlehem. Then by the Angels was first sung glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good-will. The Angels announced the new-born Child to the shepherds of the country under the title and character of SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord.§ Infidelity may affect to cavil at what it cannot comprehend, or even to deny what it never can disprove; but to sound reason and religion it will be always clear, that these prophecies relating to the Messiah are too well authenticated to be ever rationally denied, too explicit to be misunderstood, and too palpably verified in the Person of Jesus Christ not to be assented to. But to proceed, the Child on the eighth day after his birth solemnly received the sacred name of Jesus, as the Angel had said, when he related to his Virgin mother
the

‡ C. i.

§ C. ii.

the miraculous manner of his conception. Soon after came three Kings from the east with presents to adore him.* They paid him the tribute of divine homage, and publicly professed their belief in his divinity. After this conformably to the Jewish custom he was carried to the Temple of Jerusalem, where the venerable Simeon proclaimed him aloud to be the light of the nations, the glory and the resurrection of many in Israel.

These testimonies, my Brethren, are clear and decisive, they are sacred, they are sanctioned by the pen of inspired Evangelists. From his earliest youth Jesus chose to live in obscurity under a lowly roof at Nazareth,† till he was about thirty years old, when he began to manifest himself to the public: then the most splendid evidence of his Divinity shone forth in greater lustre from every side. John the Baptist, greater than whom none had yet risen among the sons of men, declared himself not worthy even to untie the latchet of his shoe.‡ No sooner had John baptised him, than the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descended and rested upon him, while a voice from the Father declared him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. In his progress through the country the unclean spirits owned his power, and by the tongues of the possessed proclaimed him to be the Son of God, because they knew him to be the Christ, as St. Luke

* Mat. ii.

† Luke iii.

‡ Mark i.

Luke also witnesses.* On the top of Mount Thabor he appeared before three of his disciples in the shining figure of a glorified body, and the Father from the middle of the resplendent cloud, that overshadowed them, again proclaimed him to be his beloved Son, commanding all to hear him.

When God summoned Moses to appear before him on Mount Sinai,† he treated with him as his servant and chosen minister to deliver his precepts to the people of Israel. Moses therefore received the law from God's own mouth, he carried it in his hands written on two tables of stone,‡ and presented it ministerially to the people for their observance. Jesus on Mount Thabor appears in a character infinitely superior. He appears not as the servant or ministerial agent, but as the Son of God himself. Therefore to him no order is directed, no precept given. He receives not, but gives the law, as being the One supreme with the eternal Father. Being the way,§ which all are to follow, as well as the truth, which all are to believe, Jesus speaks and delivers as from himself the words of eternal life.|| Therefore hear ye him. *Ipsium audite.* Hence St. Mark ¶ very forcibly observes, how astonished the people were at the manner of his expressing himself; for he was teaching them, not like the Scribes, but as one having authority.

From

* C. iv. † Exod. xix. ‡ Exod. xxxii. § John xiv. || C. vi. ¶ C. i.

From Thabor let us now turn to Mount Calvary. There through the clouds of humiliation and ignominy, that accompanied his sufferings we shall discover the brightest marks of divine power and glory beaming round him. At his sufferings all nature was deranged, and by her confusion at the time of his bitter agony testified his being the author of all her works. The sun withdrew his light, the trembling earth was wrapped in darkness at mid-day, the veil of the temple was rent in two, the rocks split asunder, the graves opened and gave up their dead. The Centurion and Roman guards, who were witnesses of these striking prodigies, cried out from the force of conviction, *He was indeed the Son of God.**

To atone for sin and to repair the injury done to God, Jesus was thus pleased in his human nature to submit to death. But death was soon compelled to yield the victory, and to own his glorious triumph. For on the third day he rose again by virtue of his own power. He rose not like Lazarus and those other mortals, who had been resuscitated by no inherent power of their own, and were soon to sink into the grave again. Jesus rose as the author and principle of life itself not to die again. *For he is the resurrection and the life.†* By the same power as he had risen from the dead, he also rose from the earth to heaven.‡ For he, who descended first into this lower world, says St. Paul,§ is the

* Mat. xxvii.

† John ii.

‡ Acts i.

§ Eph. iv.

the same also, who ascended above all the heavens. He ascended without any external aid to lift him up. No angel, no ministering spirit, no fiery chariot was there seen. But no sooner had he taken possession of the heavenly seat of bliss, which was due to his sacred humanity, than he dispatched two angels to inform his disciples, still standing on the Mountain of Olives, that he should one day come in the same manner as they had seen him go. ||

The second coming of Jesus Christ, as announced in the sacred text, will be in the last day, and it will be to judge all men, according to their works. *Jesus Christ will come in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty, says St. John, ¶ and every eye shall see him. He is the first and the last, he is living and was dead.* This testimony, my Brethren, is clear, full, and conclusive in favour of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is here expressly stiled the beginning and the end of all things, and this must be God. To him every thing is subject, that exists in heaven, on earth, and in hell; before him all tribes of the earth shall stand, to receive sentence according to their works. Abraham, Moses, David, Elias, the Baptist, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Kings and Potentates of the universe, shall bend down and adore him as the absolute disposer of life and death, the immortal King of ages, the sovereign Lord of men and angels, the supreme Judge of every human creature. Even so be it.

Such

Such, my Brethren, is the testimony, which the holy Scripture exhibits of Jesus Christ, from his incarnation to his second coming in the last day. The prophets, the Evangelists, the Apostles, the eternal Father himself invariably concur in ascertaining his divinity, as we have briefly shown. Lost not only to religion but to shame must be the man, who should dare to deny so sacred, so authentic and so orthodox a truth: a truth, which the very name of Christianity has established beyond the possibility of a doubt. This doctrine no new upstart teacher has been ever able to invalidate by any argument he had to offer, nor against this truth has any bold declaimer ever presumed to dogmatise without being branded by the Church as a false teacher, and publicly noted as a subverter of the primitive Christian belief. Witness Cerinthus and Arius. For by no Christian can the doctrine of Christ's divinity be rejected without rejecting the only title he has to the name and character of a Christian. Who does not believe, says St. John,* is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

To the irrefragable authorities already adduced let us add the authority of Jesus Christ himself. For even by them, who blaspheme his Divinity, Jesus Christ is held in singular repute for his doctrine, for his veracity and every moral virtue, as
a darling

* C. iii.

a darling friend of the most High, as a Prophet, as the Just one, powerful in word and work.

With Christians, Jews and Gentiles there appears never to have been any doubt, but that Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who was proclaimed by Simeon, who was pointed out by the Baptist, who was crucified on Mount Calvary, who rose from the dead, and ascended triumphantly into heaven, publicly announced himself to the world as the only begotten Son of God, and the true Messiah, so often foretold, and so long expected by the Jewish nation. Though walking on earth in the form of man, he was at the same time in the form of God reigning above the highest heavens. “ No one hath
 “ ascended into heaven, says he,† but he that de-
 “ scended from heaven, the Son of man, who is
 “ in heaven. For so hath God loved the world,
 “ that he hath given his only begotten Son, that
 “ every one who believeth in him, should not pe-
 “ rish, but may have everlasting life. He, that
 “ believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting. But
 “ he, that is incredulous to the Son, shall not see
 “ life, but the wrath of God abideth in him.”
 That Jesus spoke all this of himself is most evident : but that no doubt might remain even with the most incredulous, he expressly declares himself in the following chapter‡ to be the Messiah, who is called the Christ.

The

† John iii.

‡ C. iv.

The divine character, which our blessed Lord asserted on every occasion, was so well understood by the Jewish doctors, that they affected to be highly offended at it, and hesitated not to accuse him of downright blasphemy on that account. Whom dost thou make thyself,* said they to him? Art thou greater than the Prophets? Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Amen, amen, I say unto you, before that Abraham was made, I AM, replied our Saviour. The asseveration is solemn, the expression is full to the point; it directly asserts his existence prior to his becoming man, it manifestly imports, that he is the uncreated and self-existing Deity before all ages. I am. The Jews marked its import, and immediately took up stones to stone him for it. Jesus said, many good works have I shown you from my Father, and for which of those works is it, that you are about to stone me? It is not for any good work, replied the Jews, but for thy blasphemy that we stone thee: *because thou being a man, makest thyself God.*† To this our blessed Saviour thus answered. Because I have told you, that I am the Son of God, you say I blaspheme. But the testimony I give of myself is true.‡ For I know from whence I came and whither I am going. You know neither the one nor the other. I am not alone, but I and the Father, who sent me; and he also beareth testimony of me. If I have not wrought the works of my Father, do not believe me. But if I have, give at least credit to them,

* C. viii.

† C. x. v. 33.

‡ C. viii.

them, that you may know and believe,|| that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.§ O Father, glorify me with thyself, with that glory which I had with thee, before that the world was.¶ I have made known thy name to men. *All things, that are mine, are thine, and thine are mine.*

Now of the Father nothing is so properly his, as his divinity. Consequently the divinity of the Father is the divinity of the Son, and therefore the Son, though really distinct in Person, is in nature with the Father the same one, indivisible and eternal God. To every well-disposed Christian, who is not either blinded by passion, or misled by party, these positive assertions of Jesus Christ in testimony of his divinity must appear fully satisfactory and decisive. There is however one declaration more, which by reason of the awful circumstances, that accompanied it, claims particular attention. Jesus standing before the tribunal of the Jews to give an account of his doctrine, was solemnly interrogated by the high Priest, If he were the Christ, the Son of the blessed God?* Jesus answered, I AM. And hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

From hence, my Brethren, it is indisputably evinced, that Jesus Christ must either be what he

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C

professed

|| C. x. v. 33.

§ C. xxx.

¶ C. xvii.

* Mat xxvi.

professed himself to be, the eternal Son of God, or a false teacher. That Jesus was an impostor or false teacher even modern infidelity dares not say. No Christian can bear the shocking blasphemy. In an enlightened age and in a Christian country the assertion would be not only impious, but disgraceful to the profession of a Christian. That Jesus Christ is truly the only begotten Son of God, and even God himself, the great congregation of Christians, that is, the holy Catholic Church from its first foundation has universally believed and taught in every age and in every clime, and has consequently always paid him that supreme homage, which is only due to the supreme Being. In effect the whole life of Jesus Christ upon earth, his words, his precepts, his miracles, his promises, directly tend to establish his divinity, the priority of his existence in heaven, and his perfect equality with the Father from eternity.

1st. View the Sanctity of his character, which equally embraces every virtue in the highest perfection, view his conduct and the whole texture of his life, as drawn in the most eloquent and persuasive simplicity by the Evangelists. How humble was his demeanour, how blameless were his manners, how pure his doctrine, how holy his conversations, how innocent his life? To his most malicious enemies he bid defiance to prove him guilty of the slightest trespass.* On the other
hand

* John viii.

hand, how noble were his sentiments, how greatly elevated above all, that is generally esteemed desirable by mortal men? By him all human applause, riches, honours, and enjoyments of a vain world were equally shunned and disavowed. But his goodness and singular charity for man appeared in all his works. How benevolent, how tender was his care for the afflicted and indigent? Witness the numberless sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf and dumb, who experienced the miraculous effects of his healing power, as he passed among them. How unremitting moreover and how ardent was his zeal for the salvation of souls, and the glory of his heavenly Father? To this were all his journies by day, his prayers and watchings by night, his discourses, his exhortations, his labours, his sufferings, his life and death wholly consecrated. No wonder the astonished multitudes should ask, who this extraordinary personage could be, when they saw the unclean spirits subject to his control,† the winds and sea obey his command. Their minds not being enlightened with the beams of divine faith, no wonder they took him for an Elias, for a Jeremiah, or for some other Prophet.* But Jesus could be no Prophet, if he were not also what he so positively and so often said he was, the Son of God. For the truth then had not been in him. To what wretched contradictions do they therefore reduce themselves, who allow the one and

C 2

deny

† Mark i.

* C viii.

deny the other? The truth of both rests on the same ground, the infallible word of God himself.

2dly. To attest this truth and to confirm this truth Jesus wrought innumerable miracles in the face of the whole Jewish nation. Those miracles were proof against the keenest criticism, and were of such a nature, that they manifestly marked the hand of God, that wrought them. Go, said he† on a certain occasion, report the things you have heard and seen : that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise up again. Miracles like these are the silent but powerful language of the Almighty, the undoubted seal of the divinity in attestation of some important truth. To them Jesus not only made a solemn appeal‡ in proof of his divine nature, but moreover declared,|| that the Jews would not have sinned in refusing to believe his doctrine, if they had not seen his miracles. Those miracles would have convinced the heathens of Tyre and Sidon.§ But they made no impression on the hearts of Bethsaida and Corazain ; shall they have no better effect upon the minds of Christians? Has the meek and humble Jesus then in the opinion of an unbelieving Unitarian healed the sick and cast out devils, has he given sight to the blind and raised the dead to life for no other purpose, than to lead the witnesses of them into error, to establish a false worship, to seduce the Jewish nation from the worship

† Luke vii.

‡ John x.

|| C. xv

§ Mat. xi.

ship of the true God, that he might set himself up as their idol in his stead? Has the one supreme, the all-perfect and eternal God then lent his miraculous powers to a pure man, in the language of infidelity, for the purpose of sanctifying an idolatrous religion throughout the world at the expense of his own honour and glory? Has the holy Spirit of God then inspired the Prophets to dispose the minds of men to believe a falsehood? Has the God of holiness then inspired his Evangelists to pen down an Evangelical romance for the practice and instruction of mankind? What contradiction! What impiety! What blasphemy! Its shafts are equally pointed against the Father and the Holy Ghost as against the Son. O Jesus, we believe with thy blessed Apostle,* that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. In confirmation of this eternal truth we believe thou hast wrought thy miracles, the indelible characters of truth.

3dly. The precepts, imposed by Jesus Christ on all his followers, also manifestly speak his Divinity. The precept of loving our neighbour goes no farther than to love him as ourselves. But the precept of loving Jesus Christ goes infinitely higher: it obliges us to love him, as God, above all things. Whoever loves his father or mother, his wife or his children, or even his own life more than me, says he, † is not worthy of me, nor can he be my disciple. But he, that shall lose his life for my sake,

* Mat. xv.

† Mat. x. Luke xiv.

fake, shall find it. We must therefore love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Such, my Brethren, is the precept. If any man, says St. Paul, † love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maran-atha. Rather than forfeit the love we owe Jesus Christ, we must be ready to sacrifice every thing we hold most dear in life, our goods, our friends, our nearest kindred, the whole world, and even life itself. But could Jesus Christ our Lord demand so absolute a sacrifice of all our worldly goods, if he were not to us the cause and source of greater goods? Or could he so peremptorily claim our life, unless he were the author and disposer of it? No, my Brethren, such a claim is the prerogative of God alone, from whom we have received and hold our life, as well as every other blessing. Jesus Christ therefore is our God, to whom all honour and glory is for ever due.

4thly. The manner, in which Jesus Christ delivered his precepts, moreover manifests his Divinity to men. When the Baptist, when Moses and the Prophets addressed the people, to whom they were sent, they always spoke as humble delegates in the name and by the authority of the most High. For they had no precepts to give, no doctrine to deliver, and no law to enforce, but that of God. But Jesus Christ, as St. Mark observes,* taught as one having authority: the doctrine and the precepts

† 1 Cor. xvi

* C. i.

precepts he delivered, he declared to be his own,* and in his own name he enjoined the observance of them to his followers: by his own authority he sent his Apostles to teach, and baptise all nations,† assuring them, that they, who should believe and be baptised, should in his name ‡ work many miracles and in the end be saved. Such a language in the mouth of a pure man would have been the height of folly and presumption; but in the mouth of Jesus Christ it expresses a power inherent in him unlimited and divine. The Apostles went in obedience to his commands, and preached every where, as the Evangelist asserts, the Lord co-operating with them and confirming their doctrine by miracles ensuing. Now will any one, who calls himself a Christian, dare to assert, that Christ sent his Apostles to preach a false doctrine, and that the Lord by his miraculous powers co-operated with them in establishing a false religion? For false must be the religion they taught, if Christ Jesus be not God. He told them to enforce every article of the doctrines he had taught them,|| of which his Divinity was one. For he had said, *I am the Son of God, § I and the Father are One. ¶* Has the heathen World then in listening to the Apostles and embracing the doctrine of Jesus Christ embraced a false religion? Have the converted nations of the earth in adoring Jesus Christ exchanged one idolatrous worship for another? Has the great Christian body for these eighteen hundred years been
mistaken

* John xv.
§ Luke xxii.

† Mat. xxviii.
¶ John x.

‡ Mark xvi.

|| Mat. xxviii.

mistaken in the divine object of their religious adoration? Or has a lewd Cerinthus, a perjured Arius, a turbulent Socinus, or a philosophical Unitarian, as he is pleased to stile himself, in these latter days been solely intrusted with the secrets of the Divinity? Has the great God of wisdom revealed to them only the fundamental point of true religion, and left the bright luminaries of his Church, the first teachers of Christianity, the Apostles and Evangelists in ignorance and error? No, my Brethren. That cannot be.

5thly. The promises made by Jesus Christ evince him to be God. For they are such as none but God could make. In the first place he promised his Apostles to send them, when he was gone, another Comforter,|| who proceeds from the Father, and who shall teach them all truth. Now what power could Jesus have over the Spirit of God, if it were not also his own Spirit, or if he himself were not likewise God? Yet he sent the holy Ghost, as he had said, and on the day of Pentecost ten days after his ascension his sacred promise was fulfilled.§ Secondly he promised them the gift of working miracles in his name;* a gift, which without rashness none but God can promise and effectually bestow. The Apostles accordingly not only received but displayed that gift in testimony of his divinity, as we read in their Acts. Thirdly, he promised them the power of remitting
sins,

|| John xvi.

§ Acts ii.

* Mark xvi.

fins, † a power peculiar to God. But in consequence of this promise Jesus gave to his Apostles that singular power on the day of his resurrection, as St. John testifies. ‡ Fourthly he promised, that upon St. Peter, as upon a rock || he would build his Church, that is, a congregation of faithful believers, against which the gates of hell never should prevail. Such a promise, my Brethren, includes the power not only of converting the hearts of men and of drawing them by an unity of faith as it were into one fold, but likewise of securing to them the integrity of faith within that fold against all the efforts, that Satan can make against it. This none but God could do, yet this Jesus Christ has done, and this promise he fulfilled, when he commissioned St. Peter to feed his Lambs and to feed his Sheep. § A visible congregation of Christian believers under the spiritual guidance of one Supreme Pastor then in consequence began, and under the same Supreme Head, the successor of St. Peter in spiritual matters, it has continued to the present day. This is the holy Catholic Church, the pillar and ground of truth. ¶ This Church from her very beginning has experienced the most violent assaults from persecutions, from heresies, from schisms, from the wickedness and immoralities of her own children, but nothing has been able to shake her from the rock, on which she stands. Earthly kingdoms may fall and vanish into nought; but thy kingdom, O God, is a kingdom of all ages. The Lord is faithful

† Mat. xviii. ‡ C. xx. || Mat. xvi. § John xxi. ¶ 1 Tim. iii.

ful in all his promises. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words, says our blessed Lord,* shall not pass away.

O Jesus, the co-eternal Son of the Father, thou art the true light,† that enlightens every man, who cometh into the world. For us men and for our salvation thou deignedst to descend from heaven and to become man, that thou mightest seek and save that, which was lost. O suffer not, O Lord, so bright a mercy to be frustrated of its end through our ingratitude and neglect. Quicken our dull souls with the rays of thy holy grace, that we may never be rebellious to the light; enlighten all those, who sit in the shade of ignorance and infidelity, that they may also rise and walk in the way of eternal life. For thou art the way, which all must follow; thou art the truth, which all must believe, and thou art the life, which we all expect for the crown of our happiness. For there is no salvation in any other,‡ neither is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved; so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend|| in heaven, on earth, in hell, and every tongue confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

* Mark xiii. † John i. ‡ Acts iv. || Phil. ii.

DISCOURSE II.

UPON THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

The Word was made flesh. John c. i. v. 14.

GOD is one in nature, and three in Persons. That there is but one God natural reason may evince, because to natural reason it is evident, that there can be no more than One supreme Being. But a Trinity of Persons, really distinct in the same divine nature, and yet making but one and the same indivisible God, is a mystery, which man in his mortal state never could have known without the light of divine revelation. This Trinity of Persons in the Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three divine Persons ineffably exist from eternity in the same undivided nature, with the same power, the same wisdom, and the same equality of all perfection. They are consequently the same one incomprehensible and eternal God; because in each one of them the Divinity is identically the same. This ineffable Unity and Trinity of God has been always taught by the Christian religion, and is the first fundamental article of her belief.

A second fundamental article of the Christian religion is, that one of these three divine Persons
became

became incarnate and dwelt amongst us.* This also is a mystery so sublime and so replete with mercy from God to man, that without the aid of revelation we neither could have conceived nor expected it. By the express word of God himself we are informed, that this real and substantial union of the divine and human nature has taken place in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, the eternal Son of God, and true light of the world. Jesus Christ therefore by associating human nature to the divine in his own Person is become both God and man, the Redeemer of mankind, the Mediator of our peace with God, and Saviour of the world.

The doctrine of a God made man was so far above the reach of man's natural comprehension, as has been already noticed, that it could not possibly be credited upon any other than divine authority. God therefore in his wisdom so revealed it by degrees, that man might not be left destitute of all consolation in his fallen state, and that the world might be prepared to receive it in due time. This wonderful work of divine mercy was first announced† by God himself to our unhappy parents soon after their transgression in the earthly paradise. This consolatory promise of a Messiah, who should one day crush the Serpent's head, was carefully handed down by tradition from generation to generation through a long series of ages. To Abraham

* John i.

† Gen. iii.

ham the great progenitor of God's chosen people it was more distinctly revealed,* that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham in spirit saw the day and rejoiced.† After him the inspired Patriarch Jacob his grandson absolutely pronounced, that when the scepter should be taken away from Judah, and a leader of his race should fail, then the Messiah, the promised expectation of nations should come.‡ From the root of Jesse, says Isaiah,§ a branch shall rise, and on him the Spirit of the Lord shall rest. For behold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son.|| Emmanuel is his name, that is to say, God-with-us. A Child is born unto us, and a Son is given to us.¶ This Child is the Prince of peace, the Father of the future age: he is God, the Wonderful, the Mighty. His empire shall be multiplied and of his peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom he shall sit, that he may establish and strengthen it with judgment and with justice from henceforward and for evermore. Hence the people, that walked in darkness, have seen a great light, and to them, that dwelt in the regions of the shadow of death, light is risen. These and the like wonderful predictions concerning the Messiah, although expressed in other terms, are likewise to be gathered from the royal Prophet. Daniel moreover is very express upon this subject. “ I beheld in the vision of the night, says he,** “ and lo! one like the Son of man came with the
“ clouds

* C. xxii. † John viii. ‡ Gen. xxii. § C. xi. || C. vii.
¶ C. ix. ** C. vii.

“ clouds of heaven, and he came even to the An-
 “ cient of days, who gave him power and glory
 “ and a kingdom. And all people, tribes and
 “ tongues shall serve him. His power is an ever-
 “ lasting power, that shall not be taken away, and
 “ his kingdom shall not be destroyed.”

The expression of *the Son of Man*, so distinctly specified by the Prophet, claims particular attention, because it is the title, which Jesus Christ our Lord afterwards appropriated in a special manner to himself in his public capacity, and must therefore specify the same person. These predictions raised the expectation of God's people and kept awake their hope of seeing the Messiah one day appear, who should heal the miseries of the Jewish nation, and restore the kingdom of Israel to its ancient splendour. They were therefore constantly pouring forth their vows and most ardent supplications to God, that he would hasten the time of their deliverance. They called incessantly upon the clouds and eternal hills in terms the most expressive of their hope and strong desire, that their Saviour would descend from the highest heavens, and shower down his graces upon all the earth. But as all prophecy is essentially obscure, 'till cleared up by the event, they could not penetrate the counsels of this wonderful Prince of peace, whom they expected; neither could they comprehend the full extent of his power and glory, nor conceive the

the

the perpetuity of his kingdom in that spiritual sense, in which it was to be understood.

That a God infinitely great and completely happy within himself should ever assume human nature and thereby partake of its common pains and miseries, that a God omnipotent and immortal, whose existence is from eternity, should be born in time and dwell in mortal flesh amongst us, was a mystery too high for flesh and blood to comprehend. Wherefore to form a just estimate, and as far as possible, to acquire a right understanding of this sublime mystery, it is not enough to search the old Scripture only, we must also consult the new, and compare the one with the other. What the ancient Prophets have been inspired to foretel, the Evangelists have likewise been inspired to explain. For the holy men of God, spoke as St. Peter assures us,* being inspired by the Holy Ghost. Under their guidance we can never err.

The Evangelists were men of consummate wisdom in the eyes of God, artless, sincere, holy, and incapable of dissimulation and deceit. Such have they been considered by all succeeding ages. They were well versed in the writings of the Prophets, as appears from their own, and singularly endowed with the gifts of the holy Spirit. St. John, one of the Evangelists, tells us, that “ the
“ Word

* 2 Ep. 1.

“ Word was made flesh,* and dwelt amongst us ;
 “ that the Word is God, by whom all things are
 “ made ; that in the beginning the Word was,
 “ and was eternally with God.” Consequently
 the Word was never made, but has always been
 and has had no beginning. He is therefore a self-
 existing Being before all ages, immense, omni-
 potent, unlimited and eternal. This is the true
 God ; † the Word of God is his name ; ‡ he is
 the same God as the Father, § the King of kings
 and the Lord of lords. For from the Father he
 essentially and eternally proceeds as his only be-
 gotten, consubstantial and co-eternal Son, the
 splendour of his glory, and the uncreated-figure
 of his substance. To him therefore St. Paul di-
 rectly and absolutely applies ¶ these words of the
 Psalmist, “ And thou, Lord, hast founded the
 “ earth in the beginning, and the work of thy
 “ hands are the heavens ; these shall perish, but
 “ thou shalt remain. These shall grow old like a
 “ garment ; thou shalt change them, and they
 “ shall be changed, but thou thyself art the same,
 “ and thy years shall not fail.”

From these concurrent testimonies of the old
 and new Testament it is indisputably evinced, that
 the eternal Word, the only begotten Son of the
 Father is become incarnate, and that by an union
 of the divine and human nature in the same Per-
 son Jesus Christ is both God and man. The Pro-
 phets,

* G. i. † 1 Ep. v. ‡ Rev. xix. § John x. ¶ Heb. i.

phets, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the whole Catholic Church in fine in every age and in every nation, where it has ever been professed, unanimously agree in their belief of this divine mystery. How this mystery has been wrought is our next subject of inquiry.

After a lapse of four thousand years from Adam's fall, when the plenitude of time fixed for man's redemption was at hand, God* sent the Angel Gabriel to a Virgin, whose name was Mary, for the express purpose of obtaining her consent to become mother of the Word incarnate. Mary by the special disposition of divine Providence was espoused to a virtuous man called Joseph, who was lineally descended from David, and lived in Nazareth, a small city of Galilee. Thither the Angel came, and entering into the house addressed the Virgin in these words: "Hail, full of
" grace, our Lord is with thee, blessed art thou
" amongst women. The dignity, to which Mary by the grace of her Creator was now destined, was so eminent, and so unparalleled were the virtues, which in consequence adorned her soul, that to the Angel she seemed possessed of more sanctity, and replenished with richer graces, than fell to the share of any other woman. The humble Virgin, not yet apprised of the mystery to be wrought within her, was troubled at the Angel's words, and considered with herself, what so singular

* Luke i.

far an address could possibly tend to. The Angel saw the trouble of her mind, and thus continued :
 “ Mary, fear not. Great is the favour thou hast
 “ found with God. Behold thou shalt conceive*
 “ in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, whom
 “ thou shalt call Jesus. He shall be great, and he
 “ shall be called the Son of the most High. He
 “ shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever,†
 “ and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”
 “ But how shall that be, replied Mary, since my
 “ fixed purpose is to remain a Virgin, as I am ?”
 “ It shall be by the power of the most High.
 “ For the Holy Spirit shall come down from
 “ above,” said the Angel, “ and the power of
 “ the most High shall overshadow thee : and
 “ therefore the Holy, which shall be born of thee,
 “ shall be called the Son of God.” By this clear
 and decisive answer Mary’s difficulty was now re-
 moved, and she was fully convinced, that by the
 singular power of God, to whom nothing is im-
 possible, she might become a mother and yet re-
 main a pure virgin. Wherefore without any fur-
 ther hesitation she bowed obedience to the divine
 will. Neither doubting of the mystery, which
 was announced, nor elated with the dignity, to
 which she was upon the point of being raised,
 she humbly said to the Angel, “ Behold the hand-
 “ maid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to
 “ thy word.” The Angel having thus success-
 fully concluded his commission departed from her.

The

* Isaiah vii.

† Dan. vii.

The Virgin had now consented to become the mother of God. Her consent was no sooner given, than she conceived, and without breach of her virginal integrity bore a Son in her most chaste womb.* For by the powerful and invisible operation of the Holy Ghost a perfect human body was immediately formed of her virginal substance, into which a new-created soul was instantly infused, and both in the same moment were substantially united to God in the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, which is God the Son. Thus according to the expression of St. John,† the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. Thus are the divine and human natures substantially united in the Person of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in consequence thereof is truly and really both God and man. He is God, because he necessarily retains the same divine nature, which he had and always will have from eternity to eternity without the least internal variation or change. He is also man, because having assumed the nature of man by uniting to himself a human soul and body, he is now in all respects, sin excepted, become like one of us, as the Apostle testifies.‡ Hence by reason of a perfect communication of the properties peculiar to each nature it is true to say, that God is made man, that God was conceived and born; that God suffered, that God was crucified, that God died, and was buried. To certain ears, not

D 2

trained

* Isaiah vii.

† C. i.

‡ Heb. iv.

trained to the habit of attending to divine truths, this language may perchance sound harsh. If so, it must be solely to a want of attention, to a want of experience, and to a want of knowledge, that the seeming harshness of expression in this case can be attributed. For it must always be remembered, that in Jesus Christ there is his body, his soul, and his divinity, and that each of these three has its own peculiar qualities, which, although in a separate sense they cannot be applied to each individually, yet taken in a compound sense are strictly applicable to the whole. Thus man in his compound state is truly said to be mortal and to live but a short time; yet in his soul, which is the most precious part of him, we know him to be immortal and destined to live for ever. So on the other hand, although man be properly said to be an active, thinking Being, yet in a state of separation from his soul we know his body is no more than a lifeless lump of inactive matter. Matter is as incapable of thought, when united with as when separated from the soul. The soul only thinks.

But when it is said, that the Word was made flesh, we are not to imagine, that God was thereby altered in his nature, or by any change of his divinity transformed into man. For God is immutable by his very essence.* He is one, complete, unalterable perfection, to which no
new

* Mal. iii,

new perfection can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. Therefore there is not with him any change, nor the slightest shadow of any change.* Neither is it to be understood, that by the Word's taking flesh the divinity was either mixed or blended with human nature, so as to form out of the two a compounded nature, which should be neither human nor divine. No, my Brethren, that could not be. In Jesus Christ though the two natures really and substantially unite, yet each remains entire in itself, unconfused and unmixed; by the one he is inferior, by the other he is equal to the Father in all things. Each nature being thus perfect and distinct in Jesus Christ, it evidently follows, that in him there are also two distinct wills, one divine, the other human. This appears from the interior conflict of his mind in the garden of Gethsemani, when he humbly prayed to his eternal Father, saying, *Not my will but thine be done.*†

Hence grounded on the certainty of divine revelation, and convinced by the authority of the holy Scriptures, as they have always been received and delivered to us by the Church of God, we undoubtedly believe with the faithful of all ages, that Jesus Christ our Redeemer is the only begotten Son of the Father, who having always with Him and the Holy Ghost the same indivisible nature, is therefore with them the same one indivisible

* James i.

† Luke xxii.

ſible and eternal God : that in the womb of the Virgin Mary he became incarnate by taking to himſelf a human body and ſoul like ours, and thereby became truly man without ceasing to be what he always was truly God.

This, my Brethren, is the Catholic Church's doctrine concerning the mystery of the Incarnation. It is the doctrine of all ages, of all tongues and all nations, wherever the Catholic religion is or has at any time been professed. There never was any Catholic Christian without a belief in the Incarnation. Without a firm belief of this essential article all other articles of his pretended Creed can be no other, than a confused heap of arbitrary opinions, founded in uncertainty and believed by whim. Such a nominal believer, whoever he may be, can only be compared to a foolish man,* who built his house upon the sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat against that house : it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Similar must be the ruin of every religious system, which has not the Word incarnate for its foundation. The Incarnation of the Son of God is, as we have seen, so clearly and so fully attested in holy writ, that no man can reject it, and respect his Bible. It is a mystery so full of goodness on the part of God, that it claims our most grateful homage : a mystery so full of comfort with respect to man, that it must be a
mark

* Mat. vii.

mark of strange perverseness in him not to receive and embrace it, as the hope of his salvation.

Yet either from the malice of our infernal enemy, or from the ignorance and pride of innovating men various errors have been broached at different times against this adorable mystery, to the great scandal and disturbance of Christ's faithful flock. Before the close even of the first century Cerinthus, a disciple of Simon the magician, began to dogmatise at Antioch against the Catholic doctrine, and amongst other errors impiously maintained, that Jesus was but a pure man, sprung from Joseph and Mary in the ordinary course of nature. He had some obscure followers, whom St. John calls the Antichrists* of those days. The Bishops however of Asia Minor grew apprehensive, lest the infectious doctrine might corrupt their tender flocks, and for that reason earnestly besought St. John to refute the heresy in its birth. St. John in compliance with their request wrote his Gospel, which is a complete refutation of all, that has been or can be said against the Divinity and incarnation of the Son of God.

About the beginning of the fourth century Arius, an ambitious priest of Alexandria, being disappointed in his pretensions to that Patriarchal See, began to declaim against the divinity of Jesus Christ, boldly denying him to be God of the same divine nature and substance with the Father.

New

* 1 Ep. 2.

New and blasphemous as it was, the assertion had its abettors even in the Episcopal order, and became the cause of great commotions both in Church and state. A general council of three hundred and eighteen Bishops assembled at Nice and condemned the Arian doctrine, as repugnant to holy Scripture, and contrary to the ancient and universal belief of the Catholic Church. The Nicene Creed, after violent opposition from the condemned party, was every where received by the faithful with the greatest veneration, and has ever since been sacred in every particular Church of Christendom.

Little more than a hundred years after, Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople, being dazzled with the lustre of his own talents and eloquent abilities, erred against the mystery of the incarnation, by asserting, that as in Jesus Christ there were two natures, so were there also two Persons, the one divine, the other human; and that as he only took human nature from the Virgin, the Virgin, as he pretended, was not mother of God. Two hundred Bishops met in general council at Ephesus to determine the point, and by a solemn decree declared, that conformably to the holy Scriptures the Virgin Mary was truly the mother of God, and that such had always been the sense of the holy Catholic Church. Because by having contributed a part of her corporeal substance for the formation of Jesus's body in her womb, Mary was

was

was truly the mother of Him, who was truly God.

Eutyches, an illiterate Abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, and Dioscorus Bishop of Alexandria ran into the opposite extreme, and erroneously maintained, that as in Christ there was but one Person, so there could be but one nature. Christ's human nature, according to them, from its union with the divinity was so blended with, or so wholly absorbed by it, as to leave him no more than the phantom of a body, and consequently though he seemed to suffer and to die, that in fact he underwent no real sufferings and no real death. This strange medley of heterodox opinions was condemned in the fourth general Council held at Chalcedon in the year 451.

In the seventh century sprung up the heresy of the Monothelites, who contended, that in Christ there was but one will, which was a divine will. This doctrine had Sergius the Patriarch of Constantinople, and Cyrus the Patriarch of Alexandria, for its chief authors. But being an innovation repugnant to the ancient faith of Christ's Church, it was solemnly condemned as such by the sixth general Council held at Constantinople in the year 680.

Such are the principal errors, which at different times have been fabricated by designing men
against

against the mystery of the Incarnation. These errors no sooner began to disturb the peace of the faithful than they were vigorously opposed and condemned by the combined Prelates of Christ's Church. Their condemnation is a repeated triumph of the Catholic truth, and to the latest posterity it will stand as an indisputable proof, that no error, and no power of hell, according to Christ's promise,* ever shall prevail against his Church. In vain then would the Unitarian or Socinian sect attempt in these latter days to renew the condemned errors of ancient times; on reflection they must feel themselves involved in the same disgrace, that crushed their former innovating Brethren.

From hence two conclusions naturally result both for our instruction and our practice.

The first is, that we humbly submit to the authority of divine revelation in believing those sublime and unfathomable truths, which are universally believed and taught by the holy Catholic Church. This right reason dictates to us. For when the point is above the reach of private judgment, reason tells us to follow the direction of that guide, which is appointed us by God himself. That guide is the holy Catholic Church. For who will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen or a publican.† God strictly claims

* Mat. xvi.

† Mat. xviii.

claims the interiour homage of our souls as well as the external homage of our actions. Without the first the latter can never please. Amongst the internal acts of our religious duty to God, the first is to subject our understanding by faith to the obedience of Christ.* Because without faith it is impossible to please God.† Therefore our blessed Saviour says, who does not believe shall be condemned.‡

The second conclusion is, that we make the best return we can of gratitude and love to our heavenly Father, who has so loved us, as to give us his only begotten Son for our Redemption. By frequent and devout reflection we should seriously endeavour to be feelingly convinced of the inestimable favour we have received : we then shall be grateful for it. Our gratitude to be sincere, can be no otherwise expressed than by a fervent and constant attention to the divine service in a faithful discharge of all our Christian duties.

O divine Jesus, we bow down and adore thy unspeakable goodness! To redeem a slave thou hast descended from thy throne of glory, to save lost man thou hast put on weak mortality. Thine, O God, is the praise, and thine the glory for so gratuitous an act. For in man there was nothing that could attract or deserve thy bounty. Without thy preventing grace there was not in the
heart

* 1 Cor. x.

† Heb. xi.

‡ Mark xvi.

heart of man even the disposition to thank thee for thy favours, or to profit by them. Pardon, O Jesus, pardon all our past ingratitude; soften our hearts into compunction; awaken in us a lively sense of thy incomprehensible goodness, that we may never fail in our duty to thee, never falter in our love, and never be confounded in our hope. Enlighten all, who sit in darkness, and in ignorance of thy sacred mysteries, that they may do honour to thy holy name by acknowledging their errour, and sincerely confess thee to be the true God* our Lord, our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

* John 1 Ep. c. v. v. 20;

DISCOURSE III.

UPON THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

Behold, I announce to you tidings of great joy, because unto you a Saviour is born, who is Christ the Lord. Luke c. ii. v. 10, 11.

THE Word incarnate, having passed nine months in the womb of his Virgin Mother, was born in Bethlehem, a city of Juda. The prophecy of Isaiah was then fully verified. For behold a Child is born unto us; God is his name.* A Virgin has conceived and brought forth a Son. Sing ye therefore unto the Lord a new song,† for he hath done great things. Sound his praise through all the nations even unto the extremities of the earth. Make his inventions known among the people; remember that his name is high. Give praise, O ye heavens, because the Lord hath shown mercy.‡ Rejoice and praise, thou habitation of Sion, for great is He, who is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Israel. Behold God thy Saviour.§ Behold the eternal Son of God has descended from heaven, and

* C. ix.

† C. xlii.

‡ C. xliv.

§ C. xii.

and in the form of a new-born infant has sprung forth for the comfort and salvation of his people.

No sooner was he born, but an Angel of the Lord came to announce him to the shepherds, who were keeping the midnight watch over their flocks in the neighbouring country. At the Angel's approach a divine brightness spread itself suddenly around them, and they grew exceedingly afraid. Be not afraid, said the Angel to them, for I bring you chearful tidings, which shall be a subject of gladness and the cause of great joy to all men. Because this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. You will find him wrapt in swathing cloths, and laid in a manger: by this sign you will know him. Scarce had the Angel thus spoken, when a multitude of the heavenly host came and joined him in strains of the sweetest melody, singing *Glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace on earth to men of good will.*

Cheered with the sounds of celestial harmony, the shepherds immediately hastened to the town of Bethlehem. There they found Joseph and Mary, and the Infant lying in the manger, as the Angel said. Their minds were enlightened at the sight. They clearly understood and believed. They believed the Child they saw to be the long-expected Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. Strongly impressed with this awful truth, they were

were filled with the most lively sentiments of gratitude, respect and homage to their great and bounteous God, who had thus manifested his glory to them ; and those sentiments they endeavoured to infuse into the hearts of all they met in their return from Bethlehem. So glowing was their charity and so prompt their zeal to praise and glorify God in the wonderful things they had heard and seen, as it had been revealed to them !

The same divine truths, my Brethren, have been revealed also to us. We believe them also on the same ground and with the same certitude of faith ; the same then should also be the grateful sentiments of our hearts. When with the eye of faith we behold the great God of heaven under the form of an infant lying in a manger, exposed to bitter sufferings from the nature of the place, from the season of the year, from the want even of the most common necessaries in life, we wonder and adore. But when we moreover reflect, that this great God of heaven became an infant and was born under all those humiliating and painful circumstances for the love of us, we wonder more. The singular circumstances that accompanied, and the signal benefits we derive from the birth of Jesus Christ, shall form the two divisions of this discourse. In the first will appear the wonderful wisdom and power he displayed in the execution of his adorable decrees ; in the second will appear the

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the wonderful goodness he has shown in providing for the happiness of man. Gratitude and zeal in his holy service is the fruit we are to reap from both.

Amongst other distinctive titles, which Isaiah* gave the Child, who was then to be born for us, he stiled him the **WONDERFUL**. For whether in the order of grace or of nature, nothing can appear so wonderful in fact, as that a God of infinite perfection should become man, that an immortal God should put on mortality, that an eternal God should be born in time, that an immense and omnipotent God should be confined in the womb of a Virgin, and be swathed in the bands of infancy. No wisdom less than infinite could have devised the means of uniting such opposite extremes. That an omnipotent God by the might of his arm should exalt weak man and make him capable of actions, which surpass his natural abilities, is no hard matter to conceive. Because that power, which first gave to man an existence out of nothing, can likewise give him the ability of exerting his existence to any extent of action, that the limited capacity of human nature will admit. But that an omnipotent God should take upon himself the weakness of man, and by choice should stoop to the infirmities of feeble infancy, is a mystery so wonderful to human eyes, that without the authority of God's own word in support of its credibility we never could have believed it.

Man

* C. ix.

Man in his fallen state was doomed to numberless infirmities and pains, which in a state of innocence he had never known. Those pains were at once the consequence and punishment of sin. But Jesus Christ, by reason of his divinity being incapable of sinning, was naturally exempt from every pain, which was the punishment of sin. Nor by such an exemption would the great end of his becoming man have been frustrated of its effect. Without grief, without pain or the least bodily affliction, he might have fully satisfied for our sins by a word, by a tear, by a single sigh from his sacred heart; because a single sigh, a tear, a word from Jesus would have been infinitely satisfactory and meritorious. Our ransom would have been paid, and a fund of superabundant merits left for the relief and comfort of our souls. But it was necessary, that man should be made fully sensible of the guilt he had incurred by sinning, and be also furnished with such motives for the future amendment of his conduct, as might effectually reclaim him from his sinful habits, and rouse him to the practice of heroic virtues. But for that, bare precept without example would not have sufficed. Jesus therefore having taken the form of man for our redemption, would also for our example partake of the common sufferings of man, becoming in all things so far like unto us, as the sanctity of his person would allow.

Jesus Christ by his divinity being the sovereign disposer of all human events had it in his power to be born at what time, in what place, and in what circumstances he pleased, in a mild or inclement season, at Nazareth or at Bethlehem, in a state of affluence or of want. Sensual man had preferred the first ; Jesus in his wisdom chose the latter. With the same wisdom he permitted Cæsar Augustus to indulge his vain desire of knowing the number of his subjects in the whole Roman empire, and to send forth his edict for their enrolment at the most unseasonable time of the year. In obedience to the imperial mandate Mary, who was then in the last stage of her pregnancy, was obliged to set off with Joseph her spouse from Nazareth, and to repair to Bethlehem the city of David, because Joseph by descent was of the house and family of David. At their arrival they found the public inns already engaged, and the town so crowded with strangers, who were come thither to have their names enrolled, that for Mary and Joseph no accommodations could be found. Under these circumstances, which Jesus for his own great designs had permitted so to happen, they retreated to an open stable for shelter against the inclemency of a winter's night. There, when the night had finished half its course, the blessed Virgin finding her time was come brought forth her first-born, wrapped him round with swathing bands, and laid him in the manger.

Great

Great God, how far removed from human sight are thy counsels! How incomprehensible are thy ways! As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are thy ways exalted above the ways of men. The hidden secrets of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to us. Thou hast chosen the foolish things of this world, as thy Apostle teaches,* to confound the wise, and thou hast chosen the weak, the mean and contemptible things of this world, to confound the strong, and to destroy the things that are.

Had Jesus Christ, my Brethren, been born amidst the affluence of wealth, or had he come in regal state surrounded with the glittering show of worldly magnificence, vain man had been flattered in his earthly notions, and on that ground might have sought to persuade himself, that the pomps of the world are not incompatible with the humility of the Gospel, or that it is not impossible to serve God and Mammon at the same time. Riches, if not temperately used, nourish the pride of life, and obviously furnish the means of gratifying every irregular passion and desire.

Jesus therefore chose to be born in a state of voluntary poverty, that by example he might teach his followers to check all inordinate desire of riches, or if riches abound, to make no other than a moderate use of them. An immoderate

E 2

swell

* 1 Cor. 1.

swell of pride had lifted up the heart of man to rebel against the God, who made him. The humble appearance of an incarnate God in the manger of Bethlehem was therefore wisely adopted to make man sensible of his crime, and to fix him within the bounds of due submission and obedience to his Creator. An ambitious desire of becoming like to God first cast the rebel Angels out of heaven, and afterwards ruined our disobedient parents in the earthly paradise. Jesus Christ was therefore pleased to descend to such a state, that should man persist in his desire of becoming like to God, he had but to imitate the virtues of an incarnate God, and he could not fail of being happy. Wonderful, O God, is the wisdom of thy decrees! Sweet, but powerful are the designs of thy providence in bringing all things to their appointed ends!

Mary the mother of Jesus, and Joseph his reputed father, were both of the royal house of David. With equal right to them as to any other branch of David's family the sceptre of Juda might have been transmitted, and with them it might have remained to that very day, had the Almighty so decreed. With the same all-ruling hand, which disposes of crowns and sceptres as he pleases, it was as easy for him to have placed them in the palace of Sion, as in a stable at Bethlehem. But that was not suitable to his own more exalted views. The notions chiefly entertained by the
Jewish

Jewish people of their expected Messiah were but low and worldly. Of his spiritual kingdom they had little or no idea. Their notions were principally confined to worldly objects. They were the selfish dictates of earthly wisdom. Their great ambition was to be delivered from the Roman yoke, and to see the kingdom of Israel restored to its former lustre. It was these worldly notions of pride and ambition, these selfish dictates of earthly wisdom, that Jesus came to destroy. The lowly state in which he chose to appear in the world, was therefore the very reverse of that expected by the carnal Jews.

The Scripture expressly says,* that Jesus was to reign for ever in the house of Jacob, and that of his kingdom there should be no end. But his kingdom was not to be of this world,† neither was it by worldly means or on worldly principles to be established. The counsels of God being different from those of the world, different also are the means employed for the attainment of their respective ends. In all worldly undertakings of importance great preparations are usually made, and great sums expended to procure success; great parade, great noise, and tumult generally unite in the execution. Vain potentates of the earth grow elate at the splendid appearance of power and magnificence, that surrounds them. But that appearance, when dispassionately considered, is in fact no more than
a gor-

* Luke i.

† John xviii.

a gorgeous cover to human weakness. The Almighty stands in need of no such imposing pageantry. Resting on the basis of his own omnipotence, he contains within himself the unlimited power of effecting whatever he pleases, in what manner and by what means he pleases, without help, without noise, without show.

Under the humble veil of poverty and seeming weakness, Jesus Christ in the crib of Bethlehem disclosed the most shining marks of power, and under the form of helpless infancy proved himself to be the omnipotent ruler of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord of men and Angels. By that power, which comprises every living creature within its unbounded empire, he silently called the Angels from their seats of bliss to come and proclaim glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace to men of good-will over all the earth. By the same divine power he also sent forth his star, and it shined to the nations of the east.* It caught the eye and attention of three of their Magi. The Magi enlightened by divine inspiration knew, that nothing less than the birth of an incarnate God, the light of the Gentiles, was thus manifested to them, and immediately set out upon their journey to seek and adore him. The star moved on before them and led them to Bethlehem. There they found the divine Infant, the object of their search. The light of revelation flashed conviction upon their
 their

* Mat. ii.

their minds, they fell upon their knees and adored him. No power, that was not divine, could have thus enlightened the understanding, and converted the hearts of unbelievers in obedience to the revelation of a truth, which neither their senses nor their reason could possibly discover. This power was then exerted by the child Jesus, who thus silently but effectually began to establish his kingdom,* which shall never end.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ, my Brethren, is a spiritual kingdom, unlimited and everlasting. To set man free from the tyranny of sin, and to open to him the gates of heaven, to break down the empire of Satan, and to overturn the altars of idolatry, to spread the knowledge of true religion over all the earth, and to fix the standard of faith upon the ruins of infidelity was its triumph. To reign by faith in the hearts of all believing nations, and to promote the glory of Almighty God by procuring everlasting happiness to men was the noble object Jesus always had before his eyes. To God's intrinsic glory indeed no new decree could possibly accrue. Because in the unlimited enjoyment of his own infinite perfections his glory was for ever full, and his happiness complete. But there is an external glory, which God receives from creatures, and there was in man a capacity of being made partaker of everlasting happiness with God in his
glory.

* Luke i.

glory. Jesus in his goodness undertook to promote them both.

For the use and benefit of man God had displayed his power in creating the world out of nothing: he had displayed his wisdom in arranging the heavens and the earth in that beautiful order and steady regularity, which forms the system of the universe: he daily displays his providence in governing and preserving the same harmonious system, without the smallest deviation from the laws he first ordained. But in his Incarnation and birth he has particularly displayed his love. In this, says St. Paul,* has appeared the love, the grace and goodness of God our Saviour, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself an acceptable people. Though in glory equal to the Father, the Son deemed it no disparagement to his divinity to take the form of man. Yes, my Brethren, from a motive of the purest love Jesus Christ became the Son of man, that he might make us the sons of God. Although he foresaw the little inclination we should have of concurring with him in the work of our salvation, yet he altered not his plan of mercy towards us. He descended from the bright mansions of life, that he might rescue our souls from the shades of death; and notwithstanding our ingratitude in return, he has relented neither in his love nor in the design he had formed of

* Titus ii. iii.

of our redemption. For our eternal good he joyfully submitted to what our nature usually abhors, humiliations, poverty, sufferings, and contempt. Behold him lying in the manger, as though he had been the refuse and despicable outcast of men! Behold the tears, that trickle from his eyes, hear the sighs, that steal from his tender breast, behold his infant limbs, chilled and trembling with the midnight cold! How precious my Brethren, are those sighs and tears of the loving Jesus! How acceptable to his heavenly Father, and how consolatory to every repenting sinner! For what sinner, however great his sins may be, cannot but be consoled with the hopes of pardon, when he contemplates the blessed Infant suffering and weeping for the sins of men.

The time indeed of Christ's nativity has elapsed long since. But the blessings, that result from Christ's nativity, never will elapse. The example he has there given of the most consummate virtues will for ever last; the marks he has there left of his most precious love can be never blotted out. The influence, which his example and his love have always had upon the principles and actions of mankind, continues still the same, and as long as it meets with no obstacle on their part, will so continue to the end of time. The channel of his mercy is still open to every man, who cometh into the world; his love for man still glows with the same warmth as in the first instant of his conception,

tion, and from his love, as from an inexhaustible source of all good, his graces never cease to flow for our sanctification in the same abundance as on the day of his nativity. For he is still our Saviour and Redeemer, and though sitting at the right hand of his Father in the full splendour of his divinity, he still desires, that all men may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Jesus came amongst his own chosen people, but to their great reproach his own chosen people received him not. In the crowded inns of Bethlehem no room for Jesus was to be found. Beware, dear Christian, lest the like reproach from a parity of reason be also applicable to you. For it is his desire to dwell within your heart; but he dwells not in the company of sin, because incompatible with his love. Wherefore search the recesses and examine the present disposition of your heart, lest some hidden sin, or some lurking attachment to sin may unfortunately drive him thence. See, what inclinations, what affections, what passions there reside, whether the love of God or of the world there commands. If any one loves me, says our blessed Lord, † he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him. How often, dear Christian, has your Saviour knockt for admittance into your heart, and how often has a crowd

* 1 Tim. ii.

† John xiv.

crowd of worldly pursuits, criminal engagements, and turbulent desires bid him be gone?

Wherefore prepare the way of the Lord, as he admonishes you by his Prophet,* and make straight his paths. For every valley shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be lowered; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough shall become smooth.

In man under the tyranny of his own unbroken passions little can be discovered, which is not a manifest contradiction of the virtues taught him by Jesus Christ. A deep fund of vanity and self-love, a strong desire of applause, an imperious haughtiness of mind, a roughness of temper, a perverse inclination to evil, a slothful neglect of spiritual duties, dissipation, intemperance, sensuality and the pride of life, generally mark the conduct of those, who fondly seek to please the world, and to gratify their sinful appetites in its service. To wean man's heart from its attachment to a corrupt world, and to bring him back into the way of salvation by the attractives of mild example was the gracious design of our blessed Redeemer, when he chose Bethlehem for the place of his nativity. The silent lessons he has there given will teach mankind the practice of every Christian virtue, humility, patience, meekness, resignation, charity and benevolence in its full extent. Jesus Christ

in

* Isaiah xl.

in the boundless extent of his love embraced all men without exception. Such, my Brethren, is the love we should also have for one another, and by this characteristic should we all be known for the followers of Jesus Christ, because we are all children of the same heavenly Father. By this, says Christ,* all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.

Jesus had all the treasures of the universe at his command, and yet chose to be born in a state of the most distressing poverty. Patience in affliction, silence under persecution, and an entire resignation to the divine appointments is the lesson here given for our practice. Hence let the poor live content in simplicity of heart, without murmuring or repining at the lot assigned them by the hand of Providence, while the rich by moderating their desires will learn in the midst of wealth to be poor in spirit. They will learn to enjoy their riches no otherwise than as the gifts of bounteous heaven, to support with decent propriety the station they hold in life, to succour the needy and afflicted, not to glitter in the circles of extravagance, nor to squander away in costly vanities the bread of helpless orphans and crying widows.

Jesus Christ descended from heaven into the stall of Bethlehem, and tho' Lord of the universe meekly submitted to the rude humiliation of being refused

* John xiii.

refused admittance within the doors of his own people. From his own unworthy vassals, in the very city of David his royal progenitor according to the flesh, he suffered this inhospitable treatment for our encouragement, for our example, and instruction. Hence let the Christian learn to lower the lofty pride of his heart, to smooth the roughness of his passions into temper, and to lift himself no longer up in opposition to the divine will. To humble himself with Christ is the direct way of being one day exalted with Christ in glory. It may, perchance, dear Christian, have been your lot to suffer reproach for justice sake, to be unkindly treated by a neighbour, to be slighted or neglected by one, whom you had reason to think your friend. You must naturally feel the sting, that pains you; but beware, lest you aggravate that pain by resentment, or by a hasty desire of revenge. Remember, blessed are the meek, because they shall possess the land.* Betake yourself in thought to the stable of Bethlehem; there you will learn to check every indignant folly, that may assault your soul; there from the divine Infant you will learn to be meek and humble of heart, the sure means of finding rest in your soul.†

O Jesus, be thou for ever blessed, and may the tongues of men and Angels be incessantly employed in sounding forth thy name, because thou art great, and hast humbled thyself for our sake.
Thou

* Mat. v.

† C. xi.

Thou art God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, omnipotent and eternal; of a pure virgin thou hast been born a Child in time for the salvation of us sinners. Dearest Saviour, we adore and magnify thy counsels, because in thy singular mercy thou hast visited thy people from on high, and hast powerfully delivered them from the hands of those, who hate them. Without thy saving grace our souls had for ever sat in the shades of death, and endless despair had been our portion far from the land of the living. But at thy birth the light of salvation is risen upon the earth, and thy glory has been revealed in the wonderful love thou hast manifested for us. By that light we must direct our steps, or we shall still wander in the dark, and lost will be the efforts of thy love to save us. Deplorable misfortune! Through the help of thy holy grace, which we humbly crave, we now firmly purpose, and it shall be our future study to concur with thee more earnestly, than hitherto we have done, in finishing the work of our salvation, by a more minute and more practical attention to the discharge of our Christian obligations.

Kindle, then, O Jesus, in our souls, the fire of thy holy love, that we may be ever prompt to undertake, and zealous to perform all, that duty shall require at our hands. Awaken in our hearts a lively sense of thy great mercy to us, that being always mindful of thy goodness we may be always
grateful

grateful in return. Comfort and support which the many trials we must pass through, till we come to the happy term, where with thee and in thee we hope to find everlasting rest. So be it.

DISCOURSE IV.

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS CHRIST.

His name was called Jesus. Luke c. ii. v. 21.

CIRCUMCISION was a religious law peculiar to the Jews; it was ordained in express terms by God himself, who first imposed it upon their great Patriarch Abraham, as a distinctive mark, by which he and his posterity should be known for a chosen people, till the promised Messiah should come for the redemption of mankind. The law admitted of no dispensation, and the ceremony was directed to be performed on the eighth day after the birth of the child. Jesus therefore according to the established law was circumcised in due form, and his name was called Jesus. For this was the name, which the Angel expressed to Mary, before she conceived him in her womb.* Other infants usually receive their name at the choice and direction of their earthly parents, but the divine Infant received his from his heavenly Father. The name was brought to his virgin Mother

* Luke c. ii.

Mother by an Angel from heaven, a name, which is above every other name; for in the name of Jesus every knee shall bend.* The name is sacred and divine, fully expressive of the sublime and awful character of him, who bears it. Jesus, that is to say Saviour, is his name; for he shall save his people from their sins.†

To show how wonderfully and in how plenteous a manner Jesus has wrought our salvation is the subject of this discourse. Before his coming we neither had the power nor the means of gaining heaven; but by him and through him alone we now have both. 1st. Jesus he is our Saviour, because he has paid the ransom of our souls. 2dly. Jesus is our Saviour, because he has furnished us with the means of saving our souls.

When Almighty God created our first parents, he created them for an end the most sublime, an end far above the reach of their natural abilities; it was to enjoy him in a supernatural state of everlasting happiness in his heavenly kingdom. When Adam was first formed out of the slime of the earth, his body like every other earthly substance, was naturally liable to corruption and decay; but by a gratuitous favour of his Creator, in was endowed with the supereminent qualities of incorruption and immortality, and consequently exempt from every external impression, that tended

* Phil. ii.

† Mat. i.

to destroy it. Being originally created, as St. Paul says,* in a state of righteousness, and in the sanctity of truth, his will was ever pliant to the dictates of reason without struggle, and reason ever prompted him to obey the divine will with alacrity. A delightful garden was his temporary place of residence, from whence after a certain term of probation, had he only persevered in his original innocence, he would have been translated from earth to heaven, which had been prepared for him from the beginning of the world. To deserve that unspeakable happiness he had but one easy precept to observe, and that was not to touch the fruit of a certain tree, which grew in the middle of paradise. But by the malice of a fallen Angel, his innocence was betrayed. He ate of the forbidden fruit, as Eve had done before him, and thereby incurred his Creator's anger.

The deluded parents of mankind had no sooner yielded to sin, but they began to feel its punishment. Their peace of mind being broken by the consciousness of guilt, their souls were that instant stung with shame and keen remorse. Having disregarded the command of their Creator, they were stripped of the happy privileges, that adorned their first innocence; they became subject to the laws of mortality and corruption. Banished from their delightful home, they were driven forth into a desert land, where they were to toil with hunger, and

* Eph. iv.

and labour and pain, till death should crumble their bodies into dust, from which they had been first formed.

· If the dissolution of their mortal substance into dust had been the only punishment of their transgression, their most noble part, I mean their souls, might have still been happy, while their bodies slept in the silent grave. But their souls being infected with the stain of sin, there was no admittance for them into the heavenly mansions. The gates of heaven were barred against them, nor was it possible by any penance they could do, or by any satisfaction they could offer, to open to themselves those gates again. For the best satisfaction they could pretend to was no more than the weak exertion of guilty and undeserving sinners; a satisfaction infinitely too small to atone for an injury done against infinite majesty. Their crime being estimated by the unbounded greatness of the God they had offended, no penance they could do in reparation of so outrageous an insult, could be ever equal to their guilt.

Our unhappy parents therefore saw themselves, their children, and their whole posterity, for ever excluded from the kingdom of heaven by their own fault, unless it should please the divine mercy, of which they were wholly undeserving, to raise them from their fallen state. For as by sin they were become rebels against God their Creator,

they had consequently forfeited all the privileges of their former state, and had lost their title of inheritance to the kingdom of heaven. Their children were then born the sons of wrath, inheriting from their attainted parents the guilt of sin and rebellion, with all their painful consequences. Through one man, says St. Paul,* sin entered into the world, and by sin, death: so death passed unto all men. For by the disobedience of one man all were made sinners, and in consequence of that one offence death reigned, and condemnation came upon the whole human race. By that heavy though just sentence man was condemned not only to lose the enjoyment of celestial happiness, which in a state of innocence he had been entitled to, but to suffer also a variety of evils in a mortal state, to which his corrupt nature was now subject.

In consequence of his having rebelled against God a strange conflict of passions sprung up within his own breast, the constant source of struggle and rebellion against himself. Being wounded in all the faculties of his soul, he found the exercise of virtue difficult and painful. Blinded in his understanding he faintly saw the force and light of the revealed truths, which made no lasting impression on him, whilst drawn by the bent of perverse nature his will was habitually inclined to follow the sensual gratification it received from external objects, rather than submit to the restraint
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* Rom. v.

of duty and reason. Reason itself was also much weakened in its discernment of right and wrong, so that it was frequently betrayed by false appearances, and for imaginary good embraced real evil. Thus in a short time vice began to spread among the sons of Adam; and to original sin actual sins of the blackest die were added without end or number. Men, wholly addicted to the indulgence of their carnal appetites, had forgot the noble end of their creation, they were grown even ignorant of the God, who made them, they made to themselves gods of creatures, and gave to idols the worship due to their Creator. Thus with the exception of one small chosen nation, the whole world lay buried in the dark gulf of ignorance and infidelity.

In this forlorn and helpless state mankind had continued to groan for full four thousand years; when it pleased the divine mercy to look down with an eye of compassion on them. The time of redemption was now come, which God had fixed for the manifestation of his love for man by sending him a Saviour in the person of his only-begotten Son. And hence it is, as St. Paul assures us,* that the goodness of God comes so strongly and so wonderfully recommended to us, because Christ our divine Redeemer vouchsafed to die for us, while we yet were sinners. For the tears of affliction, shed so long and so plenteously by all
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* Rom. v.

our race, had not cleansed our souls from guilt; our reconciliation with an offended Deity was not yet begun, nor had the sufferings of ages effected the smallest diminution in the debt we owed to divine justice.

Therefore it was not to any natural or moral good to be discovered in us, nor was it to any primary excellence of our nature, that the grace of redemption can be attributed. For the fallen Angels were originally of a more exalted nature, and capable of promoting the divine glory in a more eminent degree: yet to them God has not granted a Redeemer. To his own unbounded mercy we then must ascribe the motive, which induced him to raise up lost man, while he leaves the rebel Angels sentenced without redress to everlasting fire. A single act of his almighty will would have been sufficient to forgive the sin, and to re-instate us in the privileges of our first creation. But that act neither would have paid the ransom due for our forfeited innocence, nor have repaired the injury done by sin to God's infinite Majesty. According to the eternal decrees of God, this ransom of our souls was to be paid by sufferings, which should at the same time be a full reparation of the insult committed by our first parents against God. Such a reparation could be nothing less than infinite both in its value and in its operation, because nothing less than infinite could be equal to the offence committed against
infinite

infinite majesty. Such a reparation none but God himself could make, and to make it by sufferings seemed on the other hand to be incompatible with his divine perfections. For God in his own nature was infinitely too perfect to be capable of suffering. The means of reconciling the two extremes could be devised by infinite wisdom alone. By divine wisdom it was decreed, that God should assume human nature, which on account of its union with the divine would become capable of making an adequate atonement for sin by sufferings infinitely acceptable and meritorious.

This, my Brethren, the second Person of the most blessed Trinity has been pleased to do for our sake. The eternal Son of the Father, being in the form of God, says St. Paul,* divested himself of all the marks of greatness in assuming the form of a servant, and though equal in all things to the Father himself appeared amongst us in the shape and character of an humble, obedient, suffering man. From the moment of his Incarnation in the womb of his virgin mother, he was truly God and truly man, because to the nature of God, which he had from eternity he then joined the nature of man by taking a soul and body like us. From that moment he became truly our Redeemer; because being man he was capable of suffering for us; and as his humanity was in one person united to and subsisted in the divinity of
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* Phil. ii.

the Word eternal, his sufferings became infinitely meritorious, because they were the sufferings of a God made man. For it became him, for whom and by whom all things are,* to consummate the author of man's salvation by suffering. In the sufferings therefore of Jesus Christ our Saviour, at once appears the goodness and the justice of God most wonderfully combined together, while by the perfect and consummate sacrifice of his only Son our Lord, his divine honour is fully repaired on one hand, and our sins fully expiated on the other.

Great God, how wonderful are thy ways, how exalted are thy counsels over the sons of men! To redeem a slave thou hast sent us thy only Son, clothed in the form and habit of mortal man. For by sin we were become the slaves of Satan, fettered with the chains of bondage, and branded with the mark of reprobation. But by the grace of redemption that mark of reprobation has been blotted out of our souls, our chains have been taken off, and ourselves are raised to the high rank of adoptive sons of God, the heirs of his kingdom, and the co-heirs of Christ in everlasting glory. What exalted sentiments of praise, of admiration, of gratitude and love, ought such an effusion of the divine goodness to inspire into every human heart? With what zeal, my Brethren, with what pious affection, with what promptitude
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* Heb. ii.

of will ought we to co-operate with our blessed Lord in the great work of our salvation? For though he has gratuitously paid the ransom of our souls, yet to profit by the ransom we must comply with the moral and religious duties, which he has imposed upon us both by word and example. If we would reign with Christ, we must first learn to labour and to suffer with Christ.

For our example and encouragement in this part of our Christian duty, he voluntarily chose to live a hard and painful life from his very infancy, 'till he expired upon the cross. The divinity of his Person, united to his humanity, stamped an infinite value upon each action he performed, the least of which would have abundantly sufficed for the redemption of the whole world. But had he thus redeemed us, we then might not have been so sensible either of his overflowing mercy, or of our own unspeakable misery. To make us sensible both of the one and of the other, he was born in such circumstances as usually attend the most distress and comfortless. As though he had been but a common child of the race of Abraham, he submitted to the humiliating ceremony of circumcision, and when but eight days old began to shed his blood, as a pledge of that plenteous redemption, which he had decreed to accomplish in due season. He might at once have finished the work of man's redemption by falling with the innocents of Bethlehem a victim to Herod's sword. But for our instruction he had duties of a religious as well

well as of a civil nature to teach by example, for our observance he had the Evangelical law to proclaim, for our direction in fine in the way of eternal life, he had a Church to establish, which he has strictly commanded us to hear and obey.* Jesus Christ is therefore the Saviour of mankind, not only because he has paid the ransom of their souls from death, but because he has moreover provided them with the means of obtaining eternal life.

Jesus Christ is for this reason † styled the Mediator of the New Testament, because by means of his death he has delivered us from our former bondage of sin, and by the effusion of his own most precious blood has cleansed our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hence having in him an inherent power to save all those, who through him come unto God, ‡ he has opened the heavenly mansions to all men, and has so far placed the application of his saving power within our reach, that we may, if we only will, secure to ourselves the promise of eternal inheritance. For though almighty God in the benevolent designs of his universal Providence most earnestly desires the salvation of all men, and has in general furnished them with every necessary help for that end, yet in his unerring wisdom he has been pleased to create us free, that virtue might have its merit, and assert its title to a just reward.

* Mat. xviii.

† Heb. ix.

‡ C vii.

reward. It is therefore left to the free determination of our own will, whether we shall concur with the merciful designs of God towards our own happiness or not, and whether we shall in practice adopt those special means, which he has ordained for the sanctification of our souls. For to benefit by the treasure of our Saviour's merits we must have recourse to those spiritual means, which he has been pleased to appoint for that end. Without the appointment of such means, incomplete had been the work of our redemption. For although Jesus Christ had laid down the ransom of our souls, and by his blood had purchased an inexhaustible treasure of merits and divine grace, yet to us that treasure would still be of no avail, were it not particularly applied by some efficacious instruments of grace according to his own most merciful institution. The most sovereign balsam, however well prepared, never can, unless properly applied, produce its healing effect. The chief and general means, which our blessed Saviour has appointed for our help, in accomplishing the work of our salvation, are the preaching of his holy Word, the establishment of his Church, the succession of Pastors, the stability and unity of Faith, and the institution of Sacraments, without which the healing grace of redemption had been never applicable to our souls.

The word of God, as handed to us by the Church from its first foundation, is as a bright
burning

burning lamp, which not only dispels our darkness, but likewise directs our steps in the way of salvation. By the blaze of this sacred light, which has spread its rays over all the earth, we distinctly see all, that God has done for us, and all, that he requires we should do for him; we in a word discover what we have to believe and what to practise. Without such a light to direct our steps we had still remained in the dark labyrinth of infidelity.

The functions of our blessed Saviour's mission were confined to the Jewish nation. There he was born, there he lived, there he preached, there in confirmation of his doctrine he wrought his miracles, and there upon a cross he died for the world's redemption. Being to reign in the hearts of all true believers, and his kingdom being to extend over the earth by the faith of converted nations, he commissioned his Apostles with that plenitude of power, which he had received from his Father, to go through the whole world, and to preach his Gospel to every creature.* To me, says he, † all power is given in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; instructing them at the same time to observe my injunctions, and to fulfil the precepts I have given you: for behold I am always with you even to the end of the world. Hence springs the visible succession

* Mark xvi.

† Mat. xxviii.

cession of pastors and teachers in the Church, who with the authority and in the name of Christ himself continue to instruct, to govern and direct the flock unto eternal life. Who hears you, hears me, says he,* and who despises you, despises me. Jesus therefore is in this our Saviour, because by providing us with a succession of living guides for our instruction and direction, he safely leads us through the plain and open way of salvation.

To all men, even to those, who are not yet come to the use of reason, baptism is essentially necessary to make good their title to everlasting life. Unless a man be born anew of water and the Holy Ghost, says our blessed Lord, † he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The baptised infant then becomes a member of the Church of Christ, and heir to the kingdom of heaven. To those, who are arrived at the years of discretion, it is moreover necessary for salvation, that they truly believe and profess the faith of Christ, when duly propounded to them. Whoever shall believe and be baptised, shall be saved, but whoever shall not believe, shall be condemned. ‡ Behold, my Brethren, the absolute obligation of submitting our judgments to the dictates of divine faith, if we hope to be saved. This faith, though so sublime in its object, is by its simplicity rendered easy to the lowest understanding by the aid of God's grace. This faith also is but one; it was taught

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* Luke x.

† John iii.

‡ Mark xvi.

us by Christ himself. Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life,* is but one, he cannot be divided, he cannot in his Gospel teach contradictory articles of belief. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.† And since this one faith is so essential to salvation, that it is impossible to please God without it,‡ our blessed Saviour in his wisdom has effectually provided, that it shall never fail.

“ Simon, Simon, says our blessed Lord,§ I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona,¶ because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, which is to say a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.” This divine prediction is fully verified by the establishment of that one, that holy, that Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which in spite of all opposition has stood unshaken and unhurt from the primitive down to the present times. Like another ark, rising in triumphant majesty above the waters of infidelity, which had deluged the whole world, she opened her capacious bosom to take in all those, who by the mercy of our Redeemer were predestined to everlasting life. Here crowding nations in obedience to the word of God sought salvation, and rejoiced to find it. Here under one supreme head,

* John c. xiv. † Eph. c. iv. v. 5. ‡ Heb. c. xi. v. 6. § Luke xxii.
¶ Mat. xvi.

head, the spiritual Vicegerent on earth of Christ our Lord, they continue to form one compact body of true believers, all united together, as the Apostle expresses it,* in one uniform profession of the same faith, in one uninterrupted communion of the same worship, same sacraments and sacrifice. For Christ, ascending on high, says the same Apostle,† bestowed his gifts on men in different degrees and for different functions, but all for the purpose of perfecting the work of his ministry, and of completing his Church in all its parts. Therefore some he gave to be Apostles, some Prophets, others Evangelists, others Pastors and Doctors, till we all meet in the unity of faith; so that we may not be tossed to and fro, nor carried about with every wind of doctrine, like children, floating as it were upon the waves of popular opinion, the dupes of crafty and deceitful preachers. For such preachers have in every age gone forth, who full of themselves and ciliate with pride, have unwarrantably presumed to interpret by their own private authority, what to private authority, as St. Peter tells us,‡ does not belong, and have consequently wrested to their own perdition certain parts of scripture, in which there are some things hard to be understood § Not so the humble and docile Christian, who for the solution of his doubts and difficulties hears the Church. From her hand he receives the inspired writings, and to her judgment he looks up for instruction in the true meaning of

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* Eph. iv. † Eph. iv. ‡ 2 Peter i. § 2 Peter 3.

them, being fully convinced, that in teaching the truths of falvation ſhe is guided by the Spirit of truth, who ſhall remain with her for ever,* and according to the promiſe of Chriſt ſhall teach her all truth.† Under this guidance he knows he can never be miſled, under this direktion he knows he can never ſtray, with this light he knows he can never be deceived.

But the mark of our bleſſed Saviour's fatherly and moſt tender care for his flock perhaps no where ſo ſtrongly or ſo amiably appears as in the inſtitution of his holy ſacraments. The ſacraments are certain viſible ſigns and inſtruments of grace, which in virtue of their inſtitution by Jeſus Chriſt they infallibly confer upon the worthy receiver. They are ſeven in number, as the Catholic Church has conſtantly taught conformably to the holy ſcriptures; and though all of them are not neceſſary for all men, yet each of them is ordained for an end peculiar to itſelf, ſo that each Chriſtian according to his ſtate may be duly ſanctified. For by the ſacraments, as long as they meet with no obſtacle from us, our ſouls are really ſanctified, and all our ſpiritual wants provided for from our very infancy to the grave.

1ſt. By Baptiſm we are waſhed from the ſtain of original ſin, and born anew to God.‡ 2d. By Confirmation we are fortified with freſh graces, and

* John c. xiv. † C. xvi. ‡ John iii.

and enabled by the holy Spirit, which is then given us,* to stand firm in the profession of our holy faith. 3d. By the Eucharist we are fed and nourished unto everlasting life, with the precious body and blood of Christ himself.† 4th. By Penance we are absolved from the sins we commit after baptism, and are reconciled again to God.‡ 5th. By extreme Unction we are furnished with special succours of divine grace for our last conflict in time of sickness, sweetly comforted and strengthened against the terrours of approaching death.§ 6th. By holy Order the Church is supplied with a constant succession of Pastors and Ministers, not only for the spiritual government|| and instruction of the flock, but also for the offering of the great Christian sacrifice¶ and due administration of the other sacraments, as appears from the texts just referred to. By Matrimony in fine the marriage contract is sanctified, and the contracting parties are endowed with grace to discharge the duties of their state with fidelity, with affection, in sanctification and honour.** Thus, my Brethren, has Jesus Christ amply furnished us with the means of sanctifying our souls, and thus with joy we draw the salutary waters of eternal life from the fountains of our Saviour, as Isaiah had promised†† on the part of God for ages before.

With grateful hearts then let us adore our Saviour God; with the liveliest sentiments of true

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devotion

* Acts viii.
‡ I Cor. xi.

† John vi.
** Eph. v.

‡ John xx.
† Theff. iv.

§ James v.
†† G. 12.

¶ Acts xx.

devotion let us humbly thank him for his wonderful mercies to us ; but above all let us make it the constant study of our lives to fulfil the precepts he has given us, to follow the example he has set us, and to make sure our election to glory by faithfully concurring with those plenteous graces, which he has purchased for us by his most precious blood. He humbled himself for our sake, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* On which account God has exalted him and has given him a name, which is above every other name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell shall bend, and every tongue confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

* Phil. ii.

DISCOURSE V.

UPON THE EPIPHANY, OR MANIFESTATION OF JESUS
CHRIST.

*We have seen his star in the East, and are come to
adore him. Mat. c. ii. v. 2.*

THE birth of Jesus Christ was a subject of common joy both to Jew and Gentile. Both were equally informed, and both invited at the time to come and partake of the common blessing. For at the same time, that it was announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem by a melodious multitude of the heavenly host, it was also manifested to the nations of the east by the miraculous appearance of a new star. Our blessed Lord being born for the salvation of all men, he mercifully ordained that all ranks of men should begin to know him in the very infancy of his assumed humanity. The rich and poor, the wise and ignorant, Israelites and heathens, kings and subjects, were promiscuously called to Bethlehem, there to own and adore the divine Infant. Nations sitting in the darkness of infidelity were suddenly roused

by a wonderful light from heaven, and while the splendour of a new planet drew the attention of their outward senses, the beams of inward grace darted conviction on their minds, and prompted them to seek the truth, which in so persuasive a manner was manifested to them.

The miraculous summons of the three kings to the crib of Jesus Christ was at once the presage and beginning of that more extensive call, which has brought the nations from every quarter of the globe to the knowledge and worship of the true God. The blaze of that extraordinary star, which conducted the Magi from the east, has not since appeared, because it is no longer necessary for the direction of men in their search after truth. There is another light more general and more permanent, by which our merciful God has dispelled the darkness of infidelity, and made salvation shine on all the earth.

By the ministry of his holy word the mysteries of faith have been announced from the rising to the setting of the sun. The Gospel has been preached to the most distant nations, and its doctrine has been spread even to the extremities of the globe. This is the word of faith, which we preach, says St. Paul: * this is the light of faith, compared by St. Peter † to a shining lamp, which has been lighted up in the bosom of the holy
Catholic

* Rom. x.

† 2 Ephi. i.

Catholic Church, and continues to diffuse its purest rays of doctrine through every clime. A light, which shines upon and directs our reason in submitting to the doctrines of revelation; a light in fine, which teaches us what God in his mercy has done for man, and what man in return has to do for God.

Man being created solely for God, what has he else to do, but to follow and to worship his Creator? To know and fulfil the will of God is the whole and sole duty of a Christian. It is the summit and perfection of true wisdom. Of this wisdom a more instructive model never was exhibited than in the conduct of the three kings. Their obedience to the divine call was as prompt, as their faith was unshaken and constant. The precious gifts they offered denote the purity of their belief, and distinguish them for true adorers of the living God in spirit and in truth.

God no sooner made himself known to them, than they put themselves in readiness to fulfil what he commanded. He commanded them not only to believe in the Incarnation of his eternal Son, but likewise to seek and adore him in a foreign land. The mystery was far above the reach of human understanding; but implicitly relying on the infallible word of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived, they firmly believed what their eyes could not witness, and publicly professed what

what their senses could not comprehend. Such is the conduct of true believers in submitting to the authority of divine revelation. Being once assured that God has spoken, they readily embrace and believe the sublime truths of Christianity, as they are held forth by the holy Catholic Church, in which all faithful Christians devoutly believe.

The enlightened Magi being thus strongly grounded in the first principle of duty to God, whose wisdom they knew to be equally infallible as it was wonderful and holy, they required no other motive to rouse their faith into action. They suffered no human views and no worldly interest to retard the service they owed to God. They sought no excuse from the difficulties and expence, that must necessarily attend a long and laborious journey into a distant country they were strangers to. They might have pleaded the inconveniences, to which they exposed their people in their absence, or the dangers, to which they exposed their own persons, amidst the jealousies of the Jewish nation. To worldly policy these considerations would appear of great consequence; and they most probably were, on that occasion, enforced with much ingenuity, and plausibly supported by a show of refined argument. Under the specious pretence of human prudence, the Magi might have sat themselves down to contemplate the beauty of the star, content like many others with a speculative knowledge of the truth,
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that was revealed. But they then had stifled the grace of their vocation ; they then had frustrated the designs of providence, and had never profited by the mercy of their Redeemer. The appellation, under which they are known in holy writ, denotes them to have been wise and discerning men in their own country, and by the supernatural lights they had already received, they undoubtedly saw, that a bare knowledge of truth without the practice could only serve to render their inaction more culpable. Therefore, they no sooner knew the will of God, than they followed his call. God spoke, and they instantly obeyed ; they saw his star, and they came.* The promptitude of their obedience is so much the more meritorious, as before that day they had never been apprised of the mysteries of an incarnate God, nor explicitly taught the sublime truths of his religion. A zeal so active, and an obedience so docile to the divine call, is a lesson of important instruction to those, who desire to serve God in spirit and in truth. But to those, who rest satisfied with speculation without the practice of religion, it is a subject of keen reproach. With less difficulties in their way, with less risks to run, and less labours to undergo, how many christians fancy themselves excused from the duties of their calling, exempt from the practical part of their belief, and even justified in their habits of a soft and idle life ?

Having

* Mat. ii.

Having been educated in the bosom of the Church, we, my brethren, have had the happiness to know Jesus Christ from our earliest youth : we have been instructed in his holy law, we have imbibed the principles of eternal truth. With the knowledge of the Christian faith we have been taught, how and where God is to be found. Instead of one, we have many lights, equally sure and equally visible for the direction of our steps in the way of salvation. We have the sacred Scriptures, we have the authority of the Catholic Church, we have the example of innumerable Saints, the practice of ages, and the concurrent testimony of all christian nations under the sun. With all these advantages, let our will be only prompt and rightly disposed to follow the divine call, we can be under no reasonable apprehension either of losing our way, or of not finding the object of our religious pursuit. If doubts arise, if difficulties occur, if unforeseen trials start up, the steady and persevering conduct of the Magi will teach us how to act.

The star, which had appeared to them in the east, indicated the birth of a king of the Jews ; they therefore proceeded straight to Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, where they might naturally expect to find him. They entered the royal city, and the star no longer appearing to direct their way, they had recourse to inquiry. Unskilled in the art of dissimulation, and unawed by the danger

ger they were exposed to from the arbitrary hand of a jealous prince, such as Herod was, they confidently ask, where he is, who is born King of the Jews; openly declaring, that they had been apprised of his birth by the appearance of his star in the east, and that they were come with gifts to do homage to him. The unexpected arrival of three eastern Princes with a numerous train of attendants afforded subject of great wonder and speculation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But when the Magi were heard to declare, that the object of their coming was nothing less, than to do homage to a new-born king, the whole city was instantly in violent commotion. Herod being an alien by birth, and knowing, that he had no other title to the crown of Judah, than was given him by the Romans, thought himself personally affected by the declaration. His troubled mind was agitated with all the violence of suspicious jealousy and distrust, that ambition and the fear of losing his ill-gotten crown could inspire. His ideas being equally as gross as those of the carnal Jews, he could form no conception of a king, whose kingdom should be purely spiritual, and so concluded that the exaltation of a new king in the Jewish nation must be his downfall, and the restoration of Israel to its former state of temporal independence.

Full of this apprehension, he was determined to take every necessary precaution, that worldly policy

policy suggested for the security of his crown. His first concern was to inform himself of the place, where Christ the expected Messiah was to be born. For according to his earthly notions, he had no doubt, but Christ was the dreaded rival of his throne, whom he had to guard against. With this view he called together the chief Priests and Scribes of the people, to tell him the place specified in the sacred volumes for the birth of their Messiah. They told him, Bethlehem was the place, expressly mentioned by Micheas the prophet.* But had those Jewish doctors been faithful in citing the whole text, Herod might have been satisfied at once, that he could have nothing to apprehend from a Ruler in Israel, whose functions were represented by the Prophet to be as purely spiritual, as his Person was divine. For divine must be the Person, whose going forth is from the days of eternity.† But in the confused hurry of temporal pursuits eternity is little thought of. Herod's next concern was to learn precisely, when the child was born; and this he thought might be certainly gathered from the time of the star's appearance to the Magi. He therefore called the Magi privately to him, examined them diligently upon the subject, and having drawn from them the intelligence he wanted, civilly dismissed them, with an order to bring him back an account, after they had found the Child, that he might also go and adore him. Traitorous hypocrisy!

crify! The subsequent massacre of the innocents plainly proves what his intention was; it was not to adore, but to destroy.

The Magi with pious haste bent their way, as directed, towards the town of Bethlehem, when behold the star, which they had lost sight of during their stay at Jerusalem, appeared again, and convinced them, that they had been all the while, and still were, under the immediate guidance and protection of divine providence. We may better conceive than express the glowing sentiments of their hearts on that occasion. Their joy was exceedingly great, as the Evangelist observes; so that the nearer they came to Jesus Christ, the more lively was their hope, the more active was their faith, the more ardent was their love. They had seen the splendour of Herod's court, they had viewed the magnificence of the holy city, its stupendous temple and buildings. But in them all they discovered no charms equal to the charms of duty, no magnificence worthy of their present notice, no entertainment capable of drawing them from the more important object they had then in view.

The star continued its course to Bethlehem. When it came over the roof where the divine Infant was, it there stood still, and with a fixed stream of light pointed out to the Magi the object of their adoration. With all the emotions of pi-
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ous joy and affection they entered the house, where they found the Child with Mary his mother. Humanly speaking they might probably have expected, that some distinctive mark of majesty would appear, or that some expressive ray of the divinity would shine out, and manifest the Child to be God, whom they came to adore. For such had the characteristic brightness of his star, such had the ancient Prophets, such had the living voice of the Jewish doctors announced him to be. But no external sign either of his divine or of his regal character could they discover in him. On the contrary the testimony of their senses concurred with the circumstances of the place, in presenting him as a child of distress, a child of misery, a child of affliction and tears. In his attendants, in his abode, in his accommodations and attire, nothing was to be seen but the strongest marks of humiliation, of poverty and want. The discouraging badge in fine of dereliction and suffering seemed to put him upon a level with the most abject and most forlorn among the sons of men. From appearances so little consonant with the idea they had of the majesty of God, what thoughts was it natural for the Magi to entertain? Was there no room to fear, lest they had been misled by a fallacious light? No room to suspect, that they had been deceived by the Jewish guides? No room to doubt, whether after all their labours they had found the Child they sought?

The Magi, my Brethren, were too well grounded in the principles of true faith, to admit any such doubt. Their reliance on the authority of divine revelation was too firmly established to be shaken by outward appearances, or by the fallible evidence of their senses. Under the form of a new-born infant they believed an omnipotent and eternal God to be truly present. They were convinced, that under the veil of weak mortality infinite wisdom, infinite sanctity, and infinite greatness with all the other divine attributes lay concealed, and that the Child, whom they there beheld, was their God, the king of ages, the supreme ruler of the universe, the long-expected Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. Penetrated with this awful truth, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and adored him. Then opening their rich treasures they made to him an offering of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Their offering was no less precious than mysterious. Gold is the tribute usually paid to kings and sovereign princes, and in this light gold was offered by the Magi to Jesus Christ. For as it is written in the Revelations,* he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Frankincense among other offerings was offered to God morning and evening in his Temple upon the altar of perfumes, conformably to his own directions given to Moses for that purpose.† The offering is still sanctioned by divine authority, according to the Revelation of St. John

* C. xix. v. 16.

† Exod. xxx.

John. Another Angel came, says he,* and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might give of the prayers of all the Saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the Angel's hand. Incense therefore is a mystical offering made to God by his own appointment: and this the Magi offered to Jesus Christ, who declares himself and the Father to be one,† the same indivisible and eternal God. Myrrh in fine, is one of those aromatic gums, which were commonly employed by the Jews in embalming the bodies of their dead. Of this pious duty we have an instance in Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, who had prepared a precious mixture of myrrh and aloes, for the purpose of embalming their crucified Lord,‡ before they laid him in the tomb. This duteous tribute to the humanity of Jesus Christ was anticipated by the Magi, when they laid their odoriferous myrrh at his feet. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh, thus jointly offered by them, mystically express the joint natures of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Thus did those inspired princes pay their religious homage to the infant Jesus; thus did they acknowledge him to be their God, and the sovereign Lord of the universe, true God and true man;

* C. viii. v. 3.

† John x.

‡ John xix.

man ; thus through the cloud as it were of his humanity, which veiled the splendour of his divinity, did they discover the sun of eternal justice ; thus in fine were they guided by the steady light of revelation to surmount every doubt and difficulty, that the world or their own weak senses might raise to shake their belief of so incomprehensible a mystery. It is not to be doubted, but they accompanied their offerings with the warmest effusions of their hearts, that religion could inspire. For it is the pious affection of the soul only, that renders our external homage acceptable to God. Without a right intention the most religious acts are but empty show and Pharisaical parade.

The homage, paid by the Magi to Jesus Christ in Bethlehem was the dictate of true religion, prompting them to adore God in spirit and in truth. The same spirit, my Brethren, must also animate us, if we are sincere in our profession of serving and honouring the same God. By that all-comprehensive goodness, which excludes no people and no nation from mercy, we have been equally called, as the Magi were, into the admirable delight of divine faith. This faith has been solemnly announced to the world by Jesus Christ himself ; it has been confirmed by innumerable miracles ; it has been delivered down to all succeeding ages by the inspired Evangelists ; it has been preserved in its first unalterable purity within the bosom of the Catholic Church ; it has in fine

fine been embraced and professed by whole kingdoms and empires, and in that profession have all those steadily persevered, who entertained a due sense of the great mercy shown them. This great, this inestimable, this divine gift of faith, has by a special providence been bestowed on us.

Therefore great, my Brethren, is the tribute of adoration, which we owe to our gracious God in return for so singular a mercy. The tribute of love, the tribute of devotion, the tribute of self-denial, are the three acts of homage signified by the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which the Magi offered to the divine Infant. This homage God exacts from every Christian.

1st. Gold, being the most pure of all metals, may on that account be said with the greatest propriety to represent charity the most pure, and most perfect of all virtues. Many zealous Christians daily make a sacrifice of their gold, as a mark of the sincere love they bear to Almighty God. Thousands of both sexes by solemnly renouncing their title to all private property devoutly conform to the religious counsel of our blessed Saviour, who tells them,* if they wish to be perfect, to part with what they possess in favour of the poor, then to come and follow him. But this being no more than a bare counsel of the Gospel, addressed to such only, as are called
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* Mat. xix.

to serve God in a more perfect state, is no tribute of obligation imposed upon Christians in general. Salvation may be obtained without it. But the obligation of loving God above all things, and of loving our neighbour as ourselves, is a tribute, which every Christian in every station and rank of life is strictly bound to pay. There is no going to heaven without it. Who loves not, said the beloved Apostle,* remains in death. Without this essential virtue all other virtues have no merit, and no value in the sight of God. The most sublime knowledge of heavenly things without charity, though uttered by the tongue of an Angel, is but as the empty sound of a tinkling cymbal.† Faith, although it were strong enough to remove mountains, if not accompanied with true charity is nothing. The sacrifice even of fortune in alms-deeds to the poor, or of life itself to the flames is of no profit to a man, who has not charity.

The virtue of charity being thus so eminently great and at once so necessary to sanctify every other virtue, it is of essential consequence to know in what it precisely consists. It consists in a constant habit of loving and preferring God above all things, because above all things he is in himself deserving of all love. This constant habit of a pious will, which is founded in the knowledge we have of God's most amiable perfections, makes us always ready to do his will, always inclined to

VOL. II.

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* 1 Ep. iii.

† 1 Cor. xiii.

keep his commandments, and consequently always prepared to sacrifice every human consideration rather than forfeit his friendship by consenting to any grievous sin. Hence it often bursts out into the most fervent acts of divine love, and expresses its tender devotion in the following or in some such words. Great God, how incomprehensible is thy glory! How infinitely holy is thy goodness! How lovely are thy boundless and everlasting perfections! I love thee, Lord, for thy own sake, with my whole heart; by reason of thy own supreme excellence, which appears so wonderful in all thy works, I desire to love thee with all that ardour of affection, with all that effusion of heart, with all that intenseness of soul, which animates thy Angels and Saints in heaven.

But our love of God, to be sincere, must extend also to the love of our neighbour, because our neighbour is made as well as ourselves according to the image of God, redeemed by the same blood of Jesus Christ, and designed originally for the same glorious end of possessing God for ever in his kingdom. For whoever loves not his brother, whom he sees, says St. John,* how can he love God, whom he sees not? And this is the commandment we have from God, that whoever loves God, must also love his neighbour. This commandment prompts us to embrace with benevolence all mankind as our brethren, and this
commandment

* 1 Ep. iv.

commandment we religiously fulfil as long as we make it our practice in life to do good to all men and to injure none.

2dly. Devotion is the second tribute we owe to God, as it is specified by the frankincense, which the Magi offered to Jesus Christ. Our devotion to God is expressed in general, by a fervent attention to the things, that regard his service, but more particularly by the exercise of holy prayer. Lord, says the Psalmist,* let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight, and the lifting up of my hands be as an evening sacrifice. The hallowed smoke of incense arising from the burning coals most palpably expresses the warmth of heart as well as the elevation of mind, that should always accompany our devotions to God. For by devout prayer we honour God as the sovereign Lord of all things, and the supreme giver of all good gifts. By prayer we acknowledge our total dependence on him at the same time, that we profess his absolute dominion over all creatures. By prayer we humbly expose our wants to him, earnestly begging to be blessed with good things, and to be preserved from evil. The conscious knowledge we have of our own weak selves, and the daily help we stand in need of to restrain our passions, to check the assault of temptations, to defeat the force of our spiritual enemies, and to bear the difficulties that occur in the course of our

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* Psalm cxi.

Christian warfare through life, lays us under an indispensable obligation of daily prayer. On certain days, that are commanded to be kept holy, there also is a more incumbent obligation of public prayer, which cannot be wilfully neglected without a formal omission of religious duty, and a positive disobedience to the divine precept.

3dly. Self-denial is the third tribute we owe to God, as specified by the offering of myrrh, made by the Magi to Jesus Christ. Myrrh is bitter to the taste; bitter also to self ease is oftentimes the duty we are commanded to pay to God. Religious duties are sometimes inconvenient, sometimes even painful to weary nature. On those occasions self-denial becomes a duty, and the injunction of our divine Master commanding us to deny ourselves and to take up our cross must be then literally complied with, if we chuse to rank with his faithful followers.* It is an illusion to suppose, that we may conscientiously follow the dictates of a worldly and unprofitable life, as self-ease and fancy prompt us, or that we may innocently do or not do certain actions, as they suit our inclination or not. Whatever the service of God according to his divine precepts requires at our hands, that must be faithfully fulfilled, nor can it without breach of duty be neglected by us. To corrupt nature bitter may be the cup prepared and mixed by the hand of Providence. Providence designs

* Luke ix.

designs it for the benefit our souls. Prayer, abstinence, and fasting are seldom relished by the sensual man. Yet to make good his pretensions to the joys of heaven, his depraved appetites and irregular inclinations must be so far disciplined into order by those religious exercises, as is requisite to check their unruly sallies, and to bend them to the yoke of Christ.

Accept, O Lord, our most humble thanks, for the gratuitous light of salvation which thou hast graciously made to shine upon us. It is a light, which we never could have discovered by any power, or have deserved by any merit of our own: a light, in comparison of which the utmost stretch of natural knowledge is but mere darkness: a light, without which we had remained bewildered in the shade of infidelity, and bereft of the cheering rays of eternal life. But such is still our blindness, and so delusive are the objects round us, that without thy watchful Providence over us, we are hourly exposed to the danger of being misled by some false light, and of straying from the end, for which thou hast made us. We no longer want the extraordinary light which guided the steps of the Magi. We have Moses and the Prophets for our direction; we have the Gospel and the Church, which thou hast commanded us to hear. Deign then most gracious God, so to enlighten our minds
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by the bright infusions of thy holy grace, and so to soften our hearts by the unction of thy holy Spirit, that we may ever understand thy law and be docile to thy commands.

DISCOURSE VI.

UPON THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE
TEMPLE.

Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many. Luke c. ii. v. 34.

AMONG the many religious laws delivered by Moses to the Jewish people there was one, by which it was ordained that every male child, the first-born, should be reputed holy and consecrated to God. Forty days after his birth the child was carried to the Temple of Jerusalem, and there solemnly presented to the Lord, at the same time that the mother performed the religious ceremony of her own purification, as the law directed. To comply with this twofold ordinance the Virgin Mary and Joseph her spouse repaired to the Temple on the appointed day, carrying with them a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, the one a holocaust, the other a sacrifice for sin. Though sprung from the royal house of David and united with a man of the same illustrious pedigree, Mary disdained not to put herself upon a level in performing her religious duties with the lowest

lowest of her sex. No affectation of rank, no privilege of family hindered her from appearing with the humble offering of the poor in her hands, a turtle-dove in the place of a lamb, which was the usual offering of the rich. Full of grace as she was, free from every blemish of sin, and proclaimed by the inspired Elizabeth to be the mother of our Lord, she complies like other mothers with the ceremony of purification, as though she were not singularly blessed among women, as though the fruit of her womb had not been by virtue of the Holy Ghost, as though her Son had been no more than a meer lineal descendant of Abraham, and not the only-begotten of the Father before all ages.

There was then living in Jerusalem a man, called Simeon, just and religious in all his ways. By divine inspiration he had been assured, that death should not close his eyes, before they had seen the long-expected Messiah, the great Anointed of the Lord, the promised Consolation of Israel. Full of this longing expectation the venerable Sage came by a special impulse of the holy Spirit into the Temple, at the very time that Joseph and Mary brought in the Child Jesus. Ravished in spirit at the sight, Simeon took the divine Infant into his arms, blessed God, and said: " Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace, since mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Behold the Saviour, whom thou hast sent in sight of
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of the whole world, a light for the illumination of the Gentiles, as well as for the glory of thy people of Israel." He then blessed the parents, who stood wondering at the things he uttered concerning the Child, and addressing himself to Mary his mother, he said: " Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many, as will appear, when the different thoughts of men's hearts shall be disclosed."

Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, as St. John assures us,* came in human nature amongst his own chosen people, and they received him not. By reason of their obstinate incredulity they fell into disgrace with their merciful Redeemer. His sacred blood, as they loudly cried out to Pilate,† began even then to lie heavy on them, as it still continues upon their children to the present day. The fatal blindness which befel that perverse race, has more or less befallen other people, who have been either deaf to the word, or enemies to the cross of Jesus Christ. In these polite days of Worldly refinement the ancient virtues of the Gospel are become unfashionable. To modern philosophy the yoke of Christ appears intolerable, and his law incompatible with the vaunted rights of man. Many affect to believe scarce any thing of religion, and of those, who believe something, few there are, comparatively speaking, who

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* G. i.

† Mat. xxvii.

pay any great attention to the practical duties of their Christian profession, while others openly engage in habits incompatible with the purity of their belief. From principles and habits so repugnant to the law of Christ it is obvious to conceive, how Jesus Christ is become the occasional fall of many, though intended for the resurrection of all.

In several parts of the holy Scripture our blessed Saviour is mentioned as the foundation or corner stone, on which the whole spiritual edifice of man's salvation is built.* This is the precious, and the living stone, as St. Peter speaks,|| chosen by God for the justification of those, who truly believe in him, but rejected by men to their lasting confusion, as it was by the carnal Jews, to whom through their own infidelity it became a stumbling stone, and a rock of scandal, the occasion of their final reprobation. Therefore, says‡ our blessed Saviour to the Jews, in his explanation of these words, which are originally taken from the royal Prophet : † “ the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a people yielding the fruits thereof.” By their obstinacy in sin, the Jewish people drew down this heavy judgment upon themselves ; with obdurate and ungrateful hearts they rejected Jesus Christ their Redeemer, and on that account Jesus Christ in his turn rejected them to make room for the Gentiles. Wondering nations then saw the light of salvation rise upon the heathen world, though

* Acts iv. || 1 Ep. ii. † Mat. xxi. ‡ Psalm, cxvi.

though out of the many even of them, who were called, there were only elect.* But let no one from hence conclude, that God either wills not the salvation, or that Jesus Christ died not for the redemption of all men. To question the merciful designs of God, as if he had not sufficiently provided for the salvation of men, would be equally rash and impious. Nothing less than blasphemy would it be to suppose, that God either has not been able to effect his designs in the salvation of men, or that he has been deceived in his choice of the means, by suffering some to be lost.

No, my Brethren, God by the infinite perfection of his nature is all-bountiful, he is all-powerful, and he is all-wise. His own greater glory and the final happiness of man has guided all his counsels and all his works, within the sphere of this sublunary creation. When he created man, he endowed him with the privilege of free will, and left it in his choice either to concur or not towards his own everlasting happiness. If man freely chuses to turn the divine gifts to his own ruin, man himself is alone accountable for the sinful abuse. In sending us a Redeemer after our fall, God has still left us the exercise of our free-will, which he gave at our first creation. Whatever may be the abuse we make of the glorious privilege we have received, the power of God can be never said to be controlled by the weakness, nor his wisdom baffled by the

* Mat. xxii.

the perverseness of human malice. The grace of Redemption has been designed by infinite mercy for the resurrection of all, who had sinned in Adam. If any shall neglect to co-operate with that special grace, they themselves must answer for the neglect. Better for them would it be not to have received the grace, than to abuse it by wilful neglect after having received it.

The blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance against the unnatural brother, who had spilt it. The blood of the ancient Prophets, whom God sent at different times to reclaim his people from their sins, lay heavy upon the ungrateful Jerusalem. But here it is the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that calls down a heavier punishment. The very thought of what was to befall that obdurate people, drew tears from our Saviour's eyes. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! he emphatically exclaims,* who killed the Prophets, and stonest those, who are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Or wouldst thou but now, even at the present favourable time that is offered thee, open thy mind and embrace the means of thy reconciliation with God! But unhappily these things are hidden from thy sight, and thou art blindly bent on thy own destruction. For this reason the day of desolation shall come upon thee. Because
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* Luke xiii.

thou hast not known the time, when God visited thee with mercy, behold thy enemies shall encompass thee with a trench; they shall enclose and straiten thee on every side; they shall beat thee to the ground and thy children, that are in thee; thy dwelling shall become an abandoned desert, nor shall so much as one stone be left upon another. ||”

Alarming, my Brethren, is this threat, which Jesus Christ then uttered with tears against the sinful Jerusalem: he uttered it in punishment of her crimes, for not receiving him as her Redeemer, and for her obduracy of heart in rejecting the known truth. This threat was literally executed by the Roman arms, in less than forty years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. Jerusalem the ancient seat of religion, the chosen city of God, and by pre-eminence stiled the holy city, a city so celebrated by the inspired Psalmist, so renowned for its Temple, and so venerable for its religious magnificence, is by the judgment of God swept off the earth, never to be built again. The wretched remnants of its inhabitants, that escaped the sword, are scattered through the nations, hardened and branded with disgrace in testimony of their fathers crimes.

Sinners, unfaithful to the call of God, should reflect, and then tremble at the awful example. The Jewish nation, the cherished nation once of
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the most High, rejected and murdered the Messiah! That nation has been chastened by the heavy hand of God in punishment thereof; it is extinguished and blotted out of the list of nations. Other nations, formerly buried in the darkness of infidelity, have wonderfully emerged into light, and believed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, and Redeemer of the world. With a sincere and docile heart they believed for a time, 'till deceived by false teachers, they listened to new systems of faith, and yielding to temptations, which were flattering to flesh and blood, they by degrees mistook, and at last abandoned the genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ. What defections, what deplorable apostacies from the true faith has religion suffered in different times and places? The combined powers of schism and infidelity have invaded her empire, and drawn whole provinces and kingdoms into open rebellion against their mother Church. Their rebellion was at once the punishment and completion of their foregoing crimes. What is now become of the once flourishing Churches of Africa and Asia, where Catholicity shone for centuries with meridian lustre? Witness the bright virtues of a Cyprian, of an Austin, of a Basil, of a Gregory, of an Athanasius, of a Chrysostom, and of innumerable others, whose names are never mentioned but with honour in the Church of God. Their successors basely degenerated: they exchanged the ancient faith for new-fashioned doctrines; with deliberate obstinacy they
peristed

persisted in their errors, and hence with the loss of faith lost even their existence of a Christian people. Crushed by the weight of Turkish despotism, they are either wholly extinguished by the sword, or are doomed to drag out life in the most abject state of slavery and oppression.

For as the power of God had been exerted for the salvation of every one, who believes, says St. Paul,* so likewise has his wrath been poured out by the most visible chastisements upon those, who notwithstanding their knowledge of the truth have dishonoured its Sanctity by their reprobate and wicked lives. Because when they had known God, they glorified him not as God, nor gave thanks, but were lost in their own imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: for professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. § Striking, but instructive are these words of the Apostle. They equally regard both Jew and Gentile; they are spoken to the unwise as well as to the wise.

A signal Providence, my Brethren, has watched over you from your earliest years. Imbued betimes with the principles of Catholic faith, you have learnt what a merciful Redeemer has done, and with what dispositions of infinite benevolence he has suffered for you. Beyond the possibility of a doubt you know on what rock your faith is built, how steady according to the divine promise, and
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* Rom. c. i.

§ Rom. c. i. v. 22.

how unshaken that rock has stood through every age, amidst the storms and tempests, which the powers of Hell have raised in vain to prevail against it. By maxim as well as by habit you have been taught to practise what it teaches. Most deplorable then would be your misfortune, if contrary to the lights of conscience you should prefer the works of darkness, or if against the conviction of your own mind you shall dare to dispute the truths, which Jesus Christ has so clearly established. Corozain and Bethsaida were two cities of Judea, highly distinguished for the many miracles, which our blessed Saviour there wrought for their conversion. Their incredulity frustrated his merciful intentions of their effect, and changed his bounty into threats of the severest judgments. Woe to thee, Corozain, says he,* woe to thee, Bethsaida, because if in Tyre and Sidon the same miracles had been wrought, which have been wrought in you, they had long since done penance in sackcloth and ashes. Less inexcusable therefore is their guilt, and less grievous will be their punishment in comparison of that, which is reserved for you in the day of judgment. And thou, Caphernaum, who hast been exalted by favours to the very sky, shalt descend even to hell for thy crimes. For if Sodom had been favoured with the miracles, which have been wrought in thee, she perchance had been moved to repent of her sins, and her repentance might have left her standing to the present

* Mat. c. xi.

knowledge of thy sacred law, the very offer thou hast made us of thy heavenly kingdom, will only serve to increase and manifest our guilt, if we neglect the tribute of good works, which thou imposest on us. Grant us then, O Lord, not only the power, but the will also to perform what thou requirest for our salvation. For all our strength, all our efforts, and all our desire even of doing good must come from thee, who art our only resurrection and our life.

Jesus is the light, that enlightens every man, who cometh into the world.* Without Jesus all is darkness, infidelity, and error. For he is the way, and the truth, and the life.† None can come to the Father but through him, and through him come all those, who are predestined to life everlasting. For in no other whatever is salvation to be had, nor is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can possibly be saved.‡ To him the Lord has said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask, and to thee I will give the nations for thy inheritance, and the remote.§ parts of the earth I will deliver into thy possession.” By the zeal of Apostolical preachers the name of Jesus Christ has been carried to the extremities of the known world, and by the conversion of infidel kings and nations Jesus has extended his spiritual kingdom far beyond the most extensive empires of antiquity. Barbarous tribes

* John c. i.

† John c. xiv.

‡ Acts c. iv.

§ Psalm ii.

tribes and nations, people of every language and of every country under the sun have bowed their necks to the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ. Enlightened by the truths of Christianity, they have emerged from the dark abyfs of infidelity, and are become an instructive light to the world. Let us lift up our minds to the heavenly mansions, and in thought behold the innumerable host of blessed Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, robed with glory, and shining like so many glowing stars with the rays of immortality. These are they, who once like us were sojourners in this vale of tears, who worked their way through many tribulations, who passed through the world without following its corrupt maxims, but kept their souls undefiled and washed them clean from sin in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night. They shall not hunger nor thirst any more. Because the Lamb shall rule them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* The number of these blessed souls now reigning with Christ in heaven far exceeds all calculation, and most amply verifies the prophecy of Simeon concerning him.

But however honourable to God or comfortable to us it may be to know, that Jesus is our resurrection and the foundation of all our hope, yet that knowledge will avail but little, unless we

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moreover

* Rev. c. ii.

moreover consider and apply the means, which are requisite for us to profit by it. Unless the Son of God had become man, it never would have been possible for us since our fall in Adam either to deserve or to gain heaven. This is a most certain truth. It is no less true, that we shall no otherwise make our title good to heaven, than by the practice of those virtues, which he has taught us by word and example. Jesus Christ therefore is the resurrection of many, not only because he has given them the power, but also because in his own sacred humanity he has traced out the way and specified the means of our sanctification. For not by his merits alone, but by the joint concurrence of our own good works with his grace, and through his merits the kingdom of heaven is to be obtained. By Adam we had fallen from a state of original righteousness into the corruption of sin, and by that sin the whole human race was vitiated in its very root. By Jesus Christ we are again raised to a state of reconciliation with our offended God. To his boundless love for man it seemed not enough to redeem us by his blood, unless he should likewise train and form us to virtue by example.

Pride, self-love, and a fond propensity to indulge the inordinate desires of corrupt nature had to possessed the heart of man, that they naturally carried him to such excesses, as were no less injurious to God than detrimental to his own soul.

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To break the force and to check the fallies of those inbred passions, which grow up with us from the earliest years of life, our blessed Saviour has delivered the most positive precepts, and those precepts he enforces by the example he has set us of the opposite virtues. Humility, self-abnegation, and an entire submission to the divine appointments, however inconvenient or painful, are the virtues, of which he has given us a bright example in his nativity, in his circumcision, and flight into Egypt. On the fortieth day after his birth he would be presented, as the law directed, to his Father in the Temple of Jerusalem: thither he regularly went with his religious Parents on the stated festivals of the year; there he used frequently to pray, and there after an absence of three days he was found by his blessed Mother. Thus by example he enforces the great duty of honouring God by frequent prayer, and making to him an early offering of ourselves and of all we have, of attending the divine service, and of sanctifying by public worship those particular days, which he has commanded to be kept holy. From the twelfth year of his age to the thirtieth, the Gospel records nothing more of him, than that he went with his Parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them.* The domestic duties of a private life, far remote from the cares and noise of worldly pursuits, are in this short sentence more powerfully recom-

* Luke c. ii.

recommended, than they could possibly have been by the most flowing periods of human eloquence.

Jesus in the form of an humble penitent left his lowly retreat at Nazareth, and went to the river Jordan to be baptised by John, before he manifested himself to the world. Awed with respect, the Baptist at first withheld his compliance, till he was told, that so it was necessary to fulfil all justice.* For the accomplishment of virtue was no less the object of our Saviour's mission, than the destruction of sin, that so he might become the resurrection of many. Being baptised, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness,† where for the space of forty days he set us the example of self-recollection and fasting. By his followers, who professedly believe in the holy Catholic Church, the example cannot be thought either insignificant or superfluous. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Angel Raphael, had long before declared the prayer to be good and salutary, which is joined with fasting.‡ The example of our Saviour God powerfully animates his faithful servants to the practice. When he had fasted forty days, he was pleased for our further instruction and encouragement in the divine service, to let himself be tempted by the devil. Knowing that the life of man is a constant warfare upon earth, and that in the midst of various objects, which tend either to deter us from virtue or to allure us into sin, we
 must

* Mat. iii. † C. iv. ‡ Job. xii.

must necessarily struggle for our duty, he condescended to teach us how and with what arms we are to conquer. He then entered upon the course of his Evangelical life, which was one continued series of hardships, labours and sufferings in promoting the salvation of men, and the glory of his heavenly Father. The doctrine he taught is equally holy in its precepts, as it is sublime in its design. Its precepts mark out to us every moral and religious duty, that we owe to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves. Its design is to lead us to real happiness both in this life and the next. That doctrine he confirmed by innumerable miracles in favour of the sick, of the blind, of the deaf and dumb. In return for all this bounty to mankind he was ungratefully repaid with injuries and affronts. In the end he patiently submitted to die upon a cross for our redemption. On the third day after his death he rose again to life for our justification, assuring us thereby, that if we patiently suffer with him, with him we shall also rise triumphant and immortal. An immortal life of happiness in heaven is the promised recompence of our faithful services on earth: and that happiness our blessed Saviour took possession of, when on the fortieth day after his resurrection from the dead, he left the earth, and ascended into heaven, from the top of mount Olivet, in the presence of his disciples.

Thus

Thus has Jesus Christ displayed his wisdom, his goodness, and his power for the resurrection of man. Thus has he completed the great and wonderful work marked out to him by his eternal Father.* Thus he has redeemed our souls from sin, and placed them again in the path, that leads to life everlasting. Thus is he become the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind. In him and through him we all possess the means of being eternally happy. None perish but by their own fault. For thou art just, O Lord, and right is thy judgment. §

* John c. xvii. § Psalm cxviii.

DISCOURSE VII.

UPON THE EUCHARISTICAL INSTITUTION OF JESUS
CHRIST.

The merciful and gracious Lord hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works : he hath given food to them, that fear him. Psalm cx, v. 4.

OF all the sacred mysteries, instituted by Jesus Christ for the benefit of true believers, the blessed Eucharist is the most holy and divine. It is the most holy, because it contains within itself the great Holy of holies, and nourishes the soul of the worthy receiver with the grace of eternal life. It is divine, because under the sacred symbols of bread and wine it really and verily comprises the divine author of its institution, Jesus Christ himself. Under the appearances of corporal food our blessed Lord has prepared a sacred banquet for the spiritual nourishment of our souls : under the pure appearances of bread and wine, he gives us the real substance of his body and blood, which, when worthily received, are the seed and pledge of future glory. Such, my Brethren, is the wonderful
work

work of omnipotence, and such is the effusion of divine love, displayed in the holy Eucharist by our merciful Redeemer, in favour of mortal man. This is one of those sublime mysteries, which human reason without the help of divine faith could have never known. This is one of those revealed truths, which the Catholic Church first received from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, and which she has since continued to teach through every age, grounding her belief on the power and veracity of God's eternal word.

It neither is my design or inclination at this time to discuss or controvert the various opinions, which different societies of the Christian persuasion have adopted on the subject of the holy Eucharist. Briefly to unfold the wonders, that are contained in this adorable mystery, and to declare the Catholic belief on this important point, as it has been handed down from the beginning to the present time of Christianity, is the whole and sole purport of the following discourse.

Our blessed Lord being upon the point of concluding his mortal life by the voluntary oblation of himself upon a cross, resolved to leave mankind the most signal pledge of love, that infinite wisdom could devise, and infinite goodness could bestow. Upon the eve of his crucifixion, being at supper for the last time with his twelve Apostles, he movingly began to express the strong desire he had entertained of eating this passover

passover with them before he suffered. For Jesus knowing, says St. John,* that his hour was come, when he should pass out of this world to his Father, having loved his, that were in the world, he loved them to the end. To impress this comfortable truth on the minds of his followers, he solemnly instituted a sacred rite, which should not only stand as a perpetual memorial in his Church, but should likewise be the practical completion of all his other wonders for the sanctification of our souls. As a prelude to this divine institution, after the legal supper was over, he rose from table, put off his garments, girted himself round with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his Apostles feet. This unparalleled example of humility in Jesus Christ, this awful ceremony of washing the feet of his disciples before he would admit them to his sacred mysteries, the earnest desire he expressed of celebrating this particular passover with them, indicate something new, something great, something supernatural and divine, which he was meditating for the benefit and comfort of his faithful flock.

He had told them,† that he was the bread of life, that he was the living bread, which came down from heaven, and that every one, who should eat of this bread should live for ever. He had moreover promised to give them this living, this heavenly bread, of which the ancient manna,
 though

* C. xiii.

† John c. vi.

though by excellence called the bread of Angels,* was only the figure. For the bread, said he,† which I shall give, is my flesh for the life of the world. Your forefathers eat of the manna and died, but who eats of this bread shall live for ever. Our blessed Lord said nothing of the manner, in which he meant to communicate himself to them, and therefore his hearers began to murmur, and to debate amongst themselves how it was possible for him to give them his flesh to eat. To God, my Brethren, nothing is impossible, and to the authority of his infallible word the humble Christian readily submits in believing those divine truths, which lie not within the reach of his corporeal senses. On this divine authority he professes to believe both the Incarnation and the Trinity, though equally incapable of comprehending either. The unenlightened Capharnaites believed neither the one nor the other : no wonder then, that they gave no credit to the words of Jesus Christ respecting the mysterious communication of his body and blood. But notwithstanding their incredulity in this point, our blessed Saviour still persisted to enforce the same doctrine, which he repeatedly confirmed with a remarkable emphasis of expression. *Verily, verily I say unto you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink of his blood, you shall not have life in you. Who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life everlasting, and I will*

* Psalm lxxvii

† *ibid.*

I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

Such, my Brethren, is the promise which Jesus Christ made to his disciples of giving them his body and blood for the food and nourishment of their souls. A promise expressed in terms so clear and unequivocal, that not one of his hearers had the least doubt of its real and obvious import. Some of them indeed called it a harsh speech, but St. Peter, in the name of the twelve, pronounced it to contain the words of eternal life.

The very last evening he was to sup with his Apostles was the time he had fixed for the accomplishment of this wonderful promise he had made them. Therefore after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, he placed himself again at table and made them a most admirable discourse. *He then took bread** into his sacred and venerable hands, *and he blessed and broke, and gave to his Disciples, and said, Take and eat, THIS IS MY BODY. And having taken the cup, he gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying THIS IS MY BLOOD of the New Testament, which is shed for many, unto the remission of sins.* St. Mark and St. Luke give the like account of this divine institution, agreeing with St. Matthew not only in the substance, but also in the very words employed by our blessed Saviour on that solemn occasion. So that if words may

* Mat. c. xxvi.

may be allowed to convey the sense, which in their common acceptation they are generally held to convey, there can be no solid ground to doubt of our blessed Saviour's meaning, when he said, *This is my body, This is my blood.*

The doctrine of St. Paul upon this subject is literally the same with that of the Evangelists, and this doctrine, as he assures us, he had neither received nor learnt from man, but by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ himself.* *For I have received from the Lord, as he moreover tells the Corinthians,† what I have also delivered to you, That the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke it, and said, take ye and eat, THIS IS MY BODY: do this in remembrance of me. In like manner he also took the cup, after he had supped, saying, THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD. Do this, as often as you shall drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord. For the chalice of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communication of the Blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of our Lord?‡ He, who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."*

Moved

* Gal. c. i.

† c. xi.

‡ C. x.

Moved by these concurrent testimonies of holy writ, so often and so uniformly expressed in the same plain and unequivocal terms, the Roman Catholic Church universally believes and teaches, that the words used by our blessed Saviour in the institution of this divine Sacrament, are to be understood in their obvious and literal sense; consequently that under the outward forms of bread and wine he truly, really, and substantially gave to his Apostles his precious Body and Blood, for the nourishment of their souls unto eternal life: and when he subjoined the words, *Do this*, that he gave his Apostles the power and a command even to do the self-same thing, which he had just done, that is, to consecrate his Body and Blood with a grateful sense and lively remembrance of what he had wrought and suffered for them.

With this divine precept the Catholic Church has at all times religiously complied in her belief and practice. This is the belief she was first taught in her infancy by the Apostles themselves, and this is the belief she has transmitted down to the present age, without interruption and variation. No allegorical sense in the plain words of our blessed Lord's institution was then thought of, no figurative construction was put upon them. That device was left for Zuinglius and Calvin of the sixteenth century. The holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church through every age understand the words of Christ in their obvious sense, and when-
 ever

ever they make the holy Eucharist the subject of their discourse, they positively assert the real presence, and expressly maintain that the Body and Blood of Christ are therein truly and substantially contained under the form and appearance of bread and wine. The unanimous agreement of the Fathers upon this subject is honestly acknowledged by Luther,* though he at the same time fairly owns, that he wanted not an inclination to deny Christ's real presence in the Sacrament. But he found upon examination the evidence of the Fathers upon this subject too explicit, too strong, and too unanimous to be contradicted. "Certainly, says he,† in so many Fathers and in so many writings, the negative might have been found at least in some one of them, had they thought the Body and Blood of Christ were not really present; but they are all of them unanimous in the affirmative."

"The bread, which our Lord held out to his disciples, says St. Cyprian, ‡ speaking of the supper of our Lord, being not outwardly and to the eye, but inwardly and in substance changed, is by virtue of the word made flesh." "When the chalice, which is mixed, and the bread, which is broken, partakes of the word of God, says Irenæus,§ it becomes the Eucharist of the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Cyril of Jerusalem|| has these unequivocal

* Tom. vii. † Page 191. ‡ An. 150. § L. 5. c. 2. Adversus Hæreses. 369. ¶ Catch: 1. An. 369.

unequivocal words, “ The bread and wine of the Eucharist, before the invocation of the adorable Trinity, were meer bread and wine; but after the sacred invocation the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. For the bread of the Eucharist says the same Father,* after the invocation of the Holy Ghost, is no longer common bread, but the body of Christ.” On a certain occasion being at Cana of Galilee, “ Jesus changed water into wine by his only will :† we wonder and believe. But is he not to be equally believed, when he changes wine into blood? Take and eat, says he, This is my Body,‡ and taking the cup and giving thanks, he said, take and drink, This my blood. Now since he has thus spoken of the bread, and said, This is my Body, who will hereafter dare to doubt? and since he has so positively said, this is my Blood, who can ever doubt, so as to say it is not his Blood? “ No, says St. Hilary, § there is no room for any doubt upon the matter.”

The bread is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, as the Apostle teaches, and is suddenly changed into the Body of Christ by these words, This is my Body, as St. Gregory Nyssen says. || “ For if there be so powerful an efficacy in the words of our Lord Jesus, as St. Ambrose¶ rea- sons, as to give existence to the things that had

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none

* Cat. 3. † Cat. 4. ‡ Cat. 4. § De Trin. L. 8. Ann. 335. || Orat. Cat. c. 37, T. 3. An. 339. ¶ De Sactam. l. 4. c. 4. An. 374.

none before, how much more capable are they of working a change in the things that already exist? The heavens were not, the sea was not, the earth was not. But hear his words. He said, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created. Wherefore to answer thee, the Body of Christ was not there before the consecration, but I tell thee, that after the consecration there is now the Body of Christ." Wherefore "let us always believe God says St. Chrysoftom, * and not contradict him, though that which he says, seems to contradict both our thoughts and our senses. For his word cannot deceive us, but our senses may easily be deceived. He never errs, but we are often mistaken. Since therefore he says, This is my Body, let us be fully persuaded of it."

To swell the page with further quotations from the Fathers would be equally tedious and superfluous. If any there are, whose curiosity or doubts lead them on to a more extensive search, they will find upon examination, that the whole body of Fathers, St. Basil, St. Hierom, St. Austin, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Fulgentius, St. John Demascen, St. Gregory the Great, Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Aquin, unanimously profess and teach the same Evangelical doctrine. For they all ground themselves upon the pure and genuine text of the Gospel, which they invariably understand and explain

* Hom. 83. in Mat. An. 398.

in the literal and obvious meaning of the words. No figurative mode of expression, no metaphor, no allegory is so much as hinted at by any one of them. These Fathers, we must remember, were no less eminent for virtue, than for their learning in the different ages, in which they lived. They lived not in obscurity, their light shone forth to the Christian world, many of them sat upon the Patriarchal and Metropolitan chairs of the eastern and western churches, they were all members of the Roman Catholic communion; they are therefore to be considered not only as the public teachers, but as unexceptionable witnesses of a doctrine, which in their time was universally held and taught both by Greeks and Latins, that is, by the whole Catholic Church. And as they successively flourished at different periods of time, some gradually rising as others died away, their testimony forms one continued chain of evidence through every age, from the Apostles down to these latter days. The church therefore as well by the writings of the Fathers as by the decisions of her councils, has never ceased to teach, that the obvious is the true and real meaning of the words, This is my Body, This is my Blood. And the Church in her solemn definitions of the sense of God's holy word Christ has commanded us to hear under pain of being accounted as heathens and publicans.* Such was the stigma cast on Berenger, † Archdeacon of Angers in France, and

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the

* Mat. c. xix.

† 1050.

the first, who ever had the boldness to contradict the Church in her primitive belief of the real presence. Such was the censure passed against Wickliff,* who about three hundred years after renewed the same error in England. Such was the sentence of condemnation passed upon John Hus,† who endeavoured to propagate the same heterodox opinion in the kingdom of Bohemia. Such in fine was the anathema pronounced against John Calvin,‡ who from the town of Geneva, diffused his poisonous positions over the neighbouring countries. Thus the cry of opposition against the ancient doctrine of the Church was no sooner raised, than reprobated by her in virtue of that supreme spiritual authority, which she has received from Christ. Hence the docile Christian, listening to and relying on this infallible oracle of truth, firmly believes the following doctrines, as so many articles of the Catholic Church.

1st. That in the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist the true and real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Redeemer is substantially contained under the outward appearances of bread and wine. For what our blessed Lord gave to his Apostles at his last supper under the form of bread, he declares to be his Body, which was to be delivered for them; and that, which he gave them under the form of wine, he declares to be his Blood, which was to be shed for them. Consequently, if credit

is

* 1377.

† 1414.

‡ 1534.

is to be given to the sacred text, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ were no less real in one case than in the other ; for they were identically the same in substance, though different in appearance.

2dly. That by virtue of the words of consecration, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the Body of Jesus Christ, and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the Blood of Jesus Christ, nothing of either element remaining but their meer outward form. This wonderful change the Church has thought proper to express by the term of Transubstantiation, that is to say, the changing of one substance into another substance. Jesus Christ at Cana by a silent act of his will changed water into wine ;* and Jesus Christ at his last supper by a word changed wine into blood. The latter change no less than the former most certainly falls within the reach of omnipotence. That Jesus Christ could as easily work one change as the other, no one will deny, who believes him to be God, and that he has actually wrought them both, every Christian must confess, who believes his divine word.

3dly. That Jesus Christ gave not only the power but a command to his Apostles and in them to their lawful successors in the Priesthood, to work the same wonderful change. For by telling them to do this, he undoubtedly told them to do what

* John c. ii.

what he had just done, and to do it in memory of him. Now what had our blessed Saviour just done? He had, as we have seen, changed bread into his body, and wine into his Blood: and if his words have any meaning, this undoubtedly was the thing, which he enjoined his Apostles likewise to do. Almighty God is the absolute master of his gifts; he communicates and shares them out in what manner and to whomsoever he pleases, as he judges most suitable to his holy designs. To Moses as we read in Exodus,* he gave the power of changing rivers into blood, for the temporal chastisement of the Egyptians; and can it be thought unworthy of the divine goodness to grant a similar power to the priests of the new law, for the spiritual comfort of his chosen people in the sublime mysteries of religion?

4thly. That under every visible particle of the consecrated species Christ is actually present, whole and entire, that he therefore is in many different places at one and the same time. For since his resurrection from the dead he is become immortal and impassible, † incapable of division and suffering any more. Wherever his body is, there also is his blood, his soul, and his divinity, inseparably united together. These he now conceals under the forms of bread and wine, as he once concealed his divinity under the form of an helpless infant. Though hidden from our sight under the
 sacramental

* C. vii.

† Rom. c. vi.

sacramental veil, yet we believe him to be as truly present to us, as he was to Magdalen under the appearance of a gardener.* We see him not with our eyes, but through his infallible word we know him by our hearing, which is the organ of faith.† Jesus being ascended into heaven, sits on the right hand of God, from whence he never departs, till he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Yet St. Paul assures us,‡ that after his ascension he was seen by him as he had been seen by the other Apostles. This could only be by Christ's being present in more places than one at the same time. After this shall weak man presume to say unto the Omnipotent, Thus far thou canst go, but no farther?

Such, my Brethren, are the standing wonders, which our merciful Lord has been pleased to work for the sanctification of our souls in the institution of this divine Sacrament. The mystery far surpasses our comprehension, so does that of the Incarnation. But the same word of God equally vouches for the truth of both. Believing God to be, as he is, infinite in power, we know that he not only can, but that he also has wrought wonderful works infinitely beyond the ken of human understanding: and since by his holy word he clearly assures us, that he has thus exercised his power in instituting the Sacrament of his body and blood, let us humbly submit our judgment, as the
Apostle

* John c. xx.

† Rom. c. x.

‡ 1 Cor. c. xv.

Apostle teaches,* in obedience to Christ. The power and veracity of the God, who speaks, is the ground and motive of our belief. That we are not mistaken in the true sense of his divine word, we have the authority of the Evangelists literally concurring with the Apostle in their manner of expressing it, we have the agreement of all the holy Fathers, we have in fine the loud and unerring voice of the whole Catholic Church, in every age and in every nation under the rising and setting sun.

* 2 Cor. c. x.

DISCOURSE VIII.

UPON THE EUCHARISTICAL SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech. Heb. c. v. v. 5.

THE holy Eucharist by Christ's institution is both a sacrament and sacrifice. In virtue of that divine power, which he exerted at his last supper, our blessed Lord has bequeathed to us his precious Body and Blood for our spiritual nourishment, under the outward forms of bread and wine, as we have shewn in the foregoing discourse. This outward form of corporal food is the visible sign of that inward grace, with which it feeds and nourishes the soul of the worthy communicant unto eternal life. In this light the holy Eucharist is considered as a sacrament. Hence by reason of its supreme excellence it is called the blessed and the holy Sacrament, the living Bread, and the Bread of life, which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world.*

The

* John c. vi.

The holy Eucharist being once consecrated by virtue of that power, which Christ delegated to his Apostles and their successors in the order of Priesthood, it continues to remain present upon the altar under the visible forms of bread and wine. It is therefore applicable to a different use from that of a sacrament, and with a due intention may be offered up to God in all the form and with all the sacred rites that attend a sacrifice. This is daily done by the Roman Catholic Church in her solemn Liturgy, commonly called the Mass. In this light the holy Eucharist is considered as a clean oblation, a true and real Sacrifice. Under this consideration it forms the subject of the ensuing discourse.

Sacrifice is a religious act of supreme adoration, due only to God, the supreme Lord and Sovereign Ruler of the universe. Being devoted by its very nature as well as by religion to the sole worship of the Divinity, it requires no intention, no circumstances of time or place, to determine its object. No Angel, no Saint, no pure creature, however high in rank or dignified by grace, can claim or receive any share therein without the crime of idolatry. Therefore saith the Lord our God,* *Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me. Ye shall not make to yourselves Gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto yourselves Gods of gold. Thou shalt not adore nor worship them.*

During

* Exod. c. xx,

During the first four thousand years of the world, nature furnished the offerings for sacrifice out of her own productions, her fruits, her birds and animals. With these the ancient Patriarchs loaded the sacred altar, as piety inspired them, till a more explicit form of worship was revealed to Moses for the future observance of God's chosen people the Israelites. This manifestation of the divine will was awfully made on Mount Sinai soon after their miraculous escape from the land of Egypt. Then by God's own appointment was Aaron consecrated High Priest; then in detail were specified the different victims, the altar, the ornaments, the sacerdotal vestments, the sacred vessels and religious ceremonies to render the service more solemn, and the sacrifice more awful. With these bloody sacrifices, when offered with a clean heart, God was pleased, and by them was often rendered propitious to a sinful people, as the Scripture testifies. But their institution was only for a certain time. Limited in their duration, they prefigured another sacrifice more acceptable and lasting: they prefigured the adorable sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, who by the effusion of his precious blood has ransomed our souls from death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not effect.

The ancient law, according to St. Paul,* was but an introduction to a better hope, by which we approach to God; for it brought nothing to perfection.

* Heb. c. vii.

fection. On account of its inefficacy and weakness it was at length set aside to make room for the New Testament in the blood of Christ, the immaculate Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. That this was one day to happen, the Jewish nation had been long informed by the inspired writings. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, says the royal Prophet,* speaking in the name of Jesus to his eternal Father, but a body thou hast prepared for me, as St. Paul expresses it. † Holocausts for sin did not please thee; no longer wouldst thou accept the sacrifices, the oblations, and the holocausts which were offered according to the law. Then said I, *behold I come, as it is written of me, O God, behold I come to do thy will.*"

The rejection of Aaron's victims is here as strongly marked, as words can express. The precise time likewise, when those carnal sacrifices were to cease, is as clearly specified by the Prophet Daniel. § "Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, said the Angel Gabriel to him, that sin may have an end, that everlasting justice may be brought in, that prophecy may be fulfilled, and the Saint of Saints be anointed. Know thou therefore and take notice, that from the issuing of the order for re-building the walls of Jerusalem, to the time of Christ the leader, there shall be seven and sixty-two weeks. In the middle of the following week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail; Christ shall

* Psalm xxxix. † Heb. x. § C. ix.

shall be slain, and the people, who are about to deny him, shall be no longer his. By a foreign power their city and the sanctuary shall be destroyed. In the Temple there shall be the abomination of desolation, and the desolation shall continue even to the end." All these things, as the event has shown, have literally come to pass, in the manner and at the time mentioned by the Prophet.

Jesus Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, the Saint of Saints, has by his death redeemed the world from the bondage of sin, and opened to us the treasure of his own inexhaustible merits for the sanctification of our souls. Hence to all, who obey him, he is become the cause of everlasting salvation, as the Apostle testifies,* being called of God a High-Priest, according to the order of Melchisedeck. For the order of Aaron ceasing, when the Jews by the subversion of their laws and country ceased to be a people, a new order rose, as had been foretold, more holy and more perfect. Now since every High-Priest, according to St. Paul,† is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, it became necessary, that Christ also should have something to offer, and that for ever, according to the order of Melchisedeck. Conformably to his own divine ordinance he has his body and his blood, which under the appearance of bread and wine he daily offers by the visible ministry of his Priests of the New Testament. For they being his ministers,§
and

* Heb. v. † c. viii. § 1. Cor. iv.

and the dispensers of the mysteries of God on earth, in his name and by his authority they perform the visible function of his everlasting Priesthood. For we have a holy Priesthood, as St. Peter calls it,* established by divine authority to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We also have an altar,† whereof they have no right to eat, who serve the tabernacle. Consequently we have a sacrifice, without which the altar would be but a needless thing, and the Priesthood no more than an empty name.

To glorify God, and to sanctify the souls of men is the noble and sublime design of true religion. Pursuant to this design Jesus Christ has instituted a religion the most holy in her doctrine, and the most awful in her form of worship. Perpetual sacrifice was therefore to hold the first place. For of all the public acts of worship, that man can pay to his Creator, the act of sacrifice is the most awful and most holy. This religious duty had been always paid, as the Scripture testifies, by all true adorers from Abel to the Machabees. In these latter days can sacrifice be less a duty of religion, or be less acceptable to God, than it was in the days of Moses and the Patriarchs? Can it be less honourable to God's supreme dominion over all his creatures, or less expressive of man's thankful gratitude to God for all his benefits? The ancient sacrifices ceased at the appointed time; they were imperfect,

* 1 Ep. c. ii. † Heb. xiii.

imperfect, and had been limited to one city, and to a single Temple. Jesus Christ therefore, who came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them,* has instituted a more perfect system of religion without spot or wrinkle, a more awful priesthood, a more sacred altar, a more acceptable and more holy sacrifice; a sacrifice with no limitation of time or place but what the end of ages and the whole circumference of the globe shall fix.

Two orders of Priesthood are mentioned in the old Scripture, the order of Aaron and the order of Melchisedeck. Both were figurative; one transitory, the other permanent. Aaron of the tribe of Levi sacrificed in blood; Melchisedeck king of Salem and Priest of the most high God sacrificed in bread and wine.† The functions of the former were not to last beyond a certain period of years, while the functions of the latter shall by God's decree be continued for ever. *The Lord hath sworn, says the Royal Prophet, † nor shall he repent of what he hath sworn, Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedeck.* Thus by the sanction of an oath the most solemn, for it is made by the eternal Father to his own eternal Son, Jesus Christ is invested with an everlasting Priesthood; the sacrifice he offers is perpetual, and he offers it after the likeness of Melchisedeck. The sacrifice is divine, unbloody and immaculate. In a bloody manner

* Mat. v. † Gen. xiv. † Psalm cix.

manner he once offered himself upon the cross. The manner was after that of Aaron, by the effusion of his precious blood, never to be renewed again. The function then of Jesus's Priesthood, according to the order of Aaron is never to be repeated more; the exercise of it ceased with his last breath, when he expired upon the cross. Christ having died once for us, he dies not again, says the Apostle,* death shall no more have dominion over him. Rising from the dead immortal and impassible, he is ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father, equal to him in glory, in power, and in all perfection.

Jesus therefore on the eve of his passion being at supper with his Apostles, as the Evangelists relate, began for the first time to exercise the function of his everlasting Priesthood, according to the order of Melchisedeck. He took bread and he blessed it, saying, THIS IS MY BODY. He in like manner blessed the cup, saying, THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. The words are express, their meaning plain and obvious. Jesus our High-Priest by his powerful word changed the substance of the bread into his body, and the substance of the wine into his blood, leaving the outward form unaltered, that faith might have its merit. Under this form he first offered his body and his blood to the eternal Father, says St. Cyprian,† and then empowered

* Rom. vi. † L. 2. Ep. 3. Ad. Cecil.

empowered his Apostles to do the same. For whatever he had just done he commanded them to do. Do this, said he to them, and as often as you shall do it, do it in remembrance of me.* By this wonderful act of divine power, he provided his Church with a visible sacrifice, the spotless sacrifice of his own sacred body and blood, which he then offered, and which he shall for ever continue to offer by the ministry of those, whom he calls to partake of his Priesthood.

This is the sacrifice, which from that time to this the Priests of the holy Catholic Church, in virtue of the power committed to them by Christ himself, have never failed to offer in every age and in every clime under the sun. This is the pure oblation, of which the Prophet Malachi thus speaks, § *From the rising to the setting of the Sun my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and a clean oblation offered to my name: because great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord of hosts.* Of no other, than of the great Christian sacrifice in the likeness of that offered by Melchisedeck, can these words of the Prophet be possibly understood. For among the converted Gentiles, who had been once taught to worship the living God, this sacrifice has been always offered and no other. The sound of the Gospel has gone forth over all the earth. Nations stretching from one extremity of the earth to the

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* 1 Cor. xi. § c. i.

other have heard and embraced the faith of Christ. Churches began to rise, altars were erected, and a clean sacrifice was offered to the name of God in every place, as Malachi had expressed. The expression of the Prophet is very significant and claims our special notice. In singling out the sacrifice and the clean oblation, by which the name of God was to be magnified amongst the nations, he leads us to the knowledge of this certain truth, that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is but one. For although it be daily offered by many Priests and in many places, yet it always is the oblation of the same body and blood of our Lord. Christ is not divided, neither is he, nor can he be offered up in part or by parts, but wholly and entirely. For he is one individual Christ, always entire, always perfect, always the same, unchangeable and immortal. “ Though he be offered many times and in many places, says the learned and eloquent Doctor St. Chryostom,* yet as it is the same body, and not many nor different bodies, so is it one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered this sacrifice, by which we are cleansed; we now offer up the same. He said, *Do this in remembrance of me.* We do it; we offer not a different sacrifice, but the very same, that our high Priest then offered”

We should lessen the excellence and debase the dignity of Christ’s institution, if we fancied, when officiating at the altar according to his divine ordinance,

* Hom. xvii. in c. x. Heb.

dinance, that we do any thing less or any thing different from what he himself had done, when he said to his Apostles, *Do this*. No, my Brethren, let us rather listen to the inspired oracles of truth, than to the arbitrary conceits of men, who by straining the sacred text from its natural to a foreign sense, rob religion of its richest treasure, and themselves of their best spiritual comfort and support in the way to everlasting life. With an humble diffidence in our own understanding let us hearken to the Church, the sure and faithful interpreter of God's word. There we run no risk of being deceived. The Church, from her first existence has always used the utmost diligence in collecting and preserving authentic records of her own wary conduct respecting doctrine and morals. Ever anxious to maintain the unity of faith, which she had received from the Apostles, she has constantly watched with a jealous eye the spirit of innovation, and never failed to censure and proscribe every new and foreign doctrine the moment it began to divide the faithful. Amongst her sons she has always had many living at the same time no less distinguished for their literary talents than for virtue, men wholly estranged from all worldly pursuits, and solely addicted to the divine service, of whom some were Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastors, some Doctors and Teachers, who by the writings they have left, bear witness of the doctrine she has at all times believed and taught.

From these unexceptionable witnesses it evidently appears, that the Roman Catholic Church has uniformly taught, and that all of her communion have universally believed for near these eighteen hundred years, that in the mass is offered to God a true and propitiatory sacrifice, even the same, which Christ offered at his last supper and upon the cross: that it is one and the self-same oblation of the same body and blood of Christ substantially contained therein, and that the Chief Priest, who offers it, is likewise the same: that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, and the sacrifice of Christ upon the altar is consequently the same, and differs only in the manner of offering. The one is therefore called bloody, because wrought by the visible effusion of blood; the other unbloody, because without the appearance of blood it is wrought under the pure elements of bread and wine.

Such is, and such has always been the Catholic doctrine respecting the adorable sacrifice of Christ's body and blood in the holy Eucharist. All the holy Fathers and primitive Writers of Christianity are clear and unanimous in their testimony upon this subject, as is noticed in the foregoing Discourse. To those, who are there quoted, let it be sufficient to join one or two more, who border upon the Apostolic age. Clement who had learnt his faith from the Apostles themselves, and was chosen the third Bishop of Rome after St. Peter to govern the whole Church, in his third Epistle upon
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the duty of Priests, specifies the sacrifice by the name of *Mafs*, and having given his instructions for the due celebration of it, thus concludes: *These things the Apostles received from the Lord, and delivered to us.* Nineteen years after his death he was succeeded by Alexander the first, who in his first Epistle* to all orthodox believers, speaks as follows: “ In sacrifice nothing greater can be offered, than the body and blood of Christ. Nor is there any oblation more excellent than this, which for its perfection above all others is to be offered to the Lord with a pure conscience, to be received with a pure mind, and to be venerated by all.” Full of this truth his successors Sixtus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Soter, Fabian, and Felix have enacted ordinances, and left us their canonical directions for the due performance of that august sacrifice, which they expressly name the *Mafs*.

These in succession were all sovereign Pontiffs, men no less eminent in sanctity than in dignity of rank among their brethren, enlightened teachers and zealous guardians of the Catholic faith, which they sealed with their blood. They sat in the chair of Peter, they spoke not in private, but in public, they spoke in their pastoral capacity to the whole world. Their testimony forms one continued chain of indisputable evidence from the year 91, when St. John the Apostle and Evangelist was still living

* C. iv.

living, to the year 275. From this evidence it appears beyond a doubt, that the Catholic doctrine of the Mass as well as the term itself is neither of modern date nor of modern invention, as some unskilled in the annals of antiquity have pretended. Through the clear and uninterrupted current of Apostolical tradition this doctrine has been conveyed to us from the source of truth, Jesus Christ himself.

But notwithstanding the authorities we have produced should any one still effect to doubt, let him turn to the great Council of Nice, the authority of which is denied by none, unless by those, who with the impious Arius, deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ their Redeemer. The Fathers of this celebrated Council, who were assembled from every part of the Christian world, in settling a point of discipline concerning the distribution of the holy Eucharist, authentically declare the ancient and universal belief of the Church with respect to this adorable mystery. Their eighteenth canon stands worded to the following effect: “ By no rule or
 “ usage has it been delivered down to us, that
 “ they, who have not the power of offering, may
 “ distribute the body of Christ to those, who offer
 “ it.” From this canon it is clearly ascertained,
 1st. That in all the Churches of Christendom sacrifice was offered. 2d. That this sacrifice was that of Christ’s body, which is the Mass. 3d. That it was offered by those only of the sacerdotal order,
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and not by Deacons, whose power went not to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, which was the Body of Christ, but to distribute it to the faithful after it was offered.

From testimonies so ancient, so explicit, so unanimous and universal, arise such powerful motives of credibility, that we must either give our assent, or resign our reason. But unfortunately for religion, such information is seldom sought, and perhaps still less considered. Early prejudice, human respects, and worldly interest, often hinder men from seeking to know what party zeal will not suffer them freely to profess. Afraid, as they may be, or unwilling to be dispossessed of an hereditary opinion, though modern in descent, they appeal from the plain testimony of God's holy word to the fallacious testimony of their own senses, little thinking, that such an appeal in a matter of faith can rise from no other spring than that of incredulity itself. Such was the appeal of Thomas the incredulous Apostle. *Unless I see,* said he, * *I will not believe.* He was equally rash and obstinate in his protestation, for which he was deservedly rebuked by his divine master. He undoubtedly knew, though he did not reflect at the time, that faith is not from seeing, but from hearing, as St. Paul informs us. † Seeing is the evidence of our eyes, representing to our view the things before us. But as their representation may be false, as it often is,
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* John xx. † Rom. c. x.

for what appears to be one thing is oftentimes another, so we are liable to be led into error by it. Whereas faith is a firm act of our understanding, by which we believe what we do not see, grounded on the eternal veracity of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

Eternal praise and benediction be to thee, O God, for the ineffable blessing bestowed upon us by thy Son Jesus our Redeemer, in the adorable sacrifice of his precious body and blood. Convinced by thy infallible word, with a firm faith we believe all thy Church teaches concerning this divine mystery. Herein we have not only a sacrament for the nourishment of our souls unto eternal life, but a sacrifice moreover the most august, the most holy, and the most acceptable that can be offered. It is the body, it is the blood of thy Son Jesus, in whom thou art well pleased. By this clean and unbloody sacrifice we honour thy supreme dominion over all creatures : by this we renew the memory, and apply the merits of his death and passion to our souls for the remission of our sins : by this we present thee with an offering worthy of thy acceptance, in thanksgiving for thy bounteous goodness to us : by this in fine we invoke thy mercy to shower down new gifts and graces on us and all thy people, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE IX.

UPON THE PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

He humbled himself, being made obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Philippians c. ii, v. 8.

THE doctrine of the cross of Jesus Christ at first sight appeared so repugnant to human pride, so opposite to the maxims of worldly wisdom, that it was embraced but by few. By the carnal Jews it was deemed a scandal, and by the Gentiles nothing less than folly. By men indulging in the habits of a soft and sensual life it may be deemed so still. In the faithful believer's eye it appears a mystery wonderful indeed, but abounding with heavenly wisdom and heavenly consolation. For by this he feels himself strengthened against the terrors of approaching death, and enlivened in his hope of everlasting life: by this his labours are softened in the practice of his duty, and his sorrows soothed under the burden of affliction. The life of Jesus Christ, from his baptism in the river Jordan to his death on Mount Calvary, was
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one continued series of labour, of fatigue, of contradiction and suffering, which he freely chose to undergo for our profit and example. For our redemption he was put to a death the most ignominious, that Jewish malice could devise, *because such was his own will*, as Isaiah assures us.* *He opened not his mouth, he uttered no complaint. Mute as a lamb before his shearer he was led to slaughter, loaded with the iniquity of us all, which the Lord had laid upon him. For he was wounded on account of our iniquities, he was bruised on account of our crimes, and by his bruises we are healed.* Upon this interesting though mournful subject as often as we employ our thoughts, and we cannot employ them too often, we should be careful to reflect, who suffered, what he suffered, and for whom he suffered. It was Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and the holy Ghost, who suffered; he suffered a most cruel death, even the death of the cross, and he suffered for us sinners. The variety and excess of torments, which he freely chose to undergo in the course of his passion, strongly mark the enormity of our guilt on one hand, and on the other the force of his Almighty love.

Our blessed Lord having concluded the Paschal ceremony at his last supper, by the institution of the holy Eucharist, and an hymn being said, he went forth to the Mountain of Olives, according
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* C. liii.

to his custom, and his disciples followed him. Being come thither, he took with him Peter, James, and John, into the garden called Gethsemani, telling the rest to stay where they were, and to pray for strength against temptation. He then began to be sorrowful and sad. For he then truly bore our infirmities, and carried all our griefs, as Isaiah had foretold. The scene of his approaching passion, the rage of his enemies, the treachery of Judas, the ingratitude of his chosen people, and the general insensibility of mankind, crowded in all at once upon his mind, and pierced his soul with grief. " My soul, said he to his three chosen disciples, is sorrowful even to death. But stay you here, and watch with me in prayer, that you may not enter into temptation," He then withdrew from them about the length of a stone's throw, and falling upon his knees addressed his heavenly Father, with this most fervent prayer: " Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee, take away this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done." Here we see, that Christ, as man, naturally feared, and in the sensitive part of his soul had the feelings of sadness and sorrow, like us, but that his human will was ever most conformed to the divine. This interior anguish of mind flung him into a kind of agony, which forced from him an unusual sweat, trickling down in drops like blood upon the ground. To convince us that God never refuses his spiritual comforts to those, who voluntarily suffer for his sake, he permitted

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red himself to be comforted by an Angel from heaven ; and his agony being prolonged, he prayed the more.

But notwithstanding the tide of grief, that overwhelmed his soul, his thoughts were still turned upon his disciples. Knowing how frail and how little prepared they were against the impending storm, he rose from prayer and went to visit them. Oppressed with grief, and wearied with the labours of the day, they had indolently fallen asleep. What, said he, were you not able to watch so much as one hour with me? Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. He then went back and prayed again in these words : “ O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done.” After this he visited his disciples a second time, and finding them still sleeping as before, he sharply rebuked them for their drowsy and insensible neglect. They felt the justness of his rebuke, and knew not what to answer. He staid not long with them, but went and prayed a third time in the same words and with the same fervour, as he had twice already done. Having finished his prayer, he returned a third time to his disciples. Sleep now, said he ironically to them, and take your rest. The time for prayer is now passed, the hour of trial is at hand, the traitor approaches, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. And while he was yet speaking, behold Judas at the head of an armed multitude

multitude entered the garden. Without fear, without shame, and as it seemed without remorse, he went up to his divine master, and embraced him after the usual manner of the country. " Friend, said Jesus to him, for what purpose art thou come? Is it with a kiss, that thou betrayest the Son of Man?" For that was the signal agreed on by the traitor, saying whomsoever I shall salute, that is He, seize and lead him cautiously away. Jesus therefore knowing what was to befall him, advanced forward and asked them whom they sought. And upon their answering Jesus of Nazareth, he said, *I am he*. Struck at the awfulness of his voice, which bespoke his divinity, they drew back and fell to the ground; nor durst they, before he had given them permission, lay their sacrilegious hands upon him. Then the Tribune, and his band, and the servants of the Jews, armed with swords and clubs, as though they had been sent to seize some daring robber, laid hold on Jesus and bound him. Christian, how often at the head of thy unruly passions hast thou in like manner conspired against thy Jesus? How often, like the traitor Judas, hast thou betrayed his cause, and trampled on the sanctity of his holy law? But that was their hour and the power of darkness.

The disciples now seeing their divine master in the hands of his enraged enemies, yielded to their own weakness, and abandoned him at his utmost need. Peter had just courage enough to follow at
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a distance, as they were dragging him along in insolent triumph into the city, amidst the shouts and clamours of an outrageous multitude. How different was this his entrance from that he made but five days before into the same city of Jerusalem, when a joyous people, bearing in their hands branches of palms and olives, strewed their garments in the way as he rode along, crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord?* These were the acclamations of a fickle multitude, the passing plaudits of a false world.

Bound and guarded by a band of Soldiers, Jesus was led like a notorious malefactor, first to Annas, and then to Caiphas the High Priest. There were the accusers and false witnesses drawn together, ready to slander and traduce him: there were the jealous Scribes, the Priests and Elders of the people assembled with malice in their hearts to judge and condemn him; there was our blessed Lord, the eternal wisdom of God, to be interrogated like a criminal, and judged by his own creatures. Caiphas began by questioning him about his disciples and his doctrine. Of his disciples he said nothing: and for his doctrine, he referred him to those, who had heard it in the Synagogue and Temple, having always spoken openly to the world. On this one of the assistants gave him a violent blow upon the cheek, saying is it so thou answerest the High Priest? In weak man such an insult might

might have kindled an inextinguishable desire of revenge. But from Jesus, the sovereign disposer of life and death, it drew this meek reply, "If I have spoken evil, give proof of the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike me?" Then were his accusers called upon to prove all they could against him. But so irreproachable in all things had been his conduct, and so pure his doctrine, that not the shadow even of any thing wrong could be discovered either in one or in the other. Many allegations were indeed advanced, but on no other foundation than false report. The evidence, far from agreeing, even contradicted and defeated itself. Jesus remained silent. The High Priest then rising up adjured him by the living God to tell them, if he were the Christ the Son of God. Out of respect to the sacred name of God, Jesus replied, *I am; and you shall hereafter see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* Had Caiphas been sincere in the important question he proposed the light, that flashed from our Saviour's answer, might have opened his eyes to see the truth, or a salutary fear of judgment might have made him relent in his wicked purpose. But on a heart full of rancour and hardened with guilt, the most striking truths make no impression. With all the rage of hypocritical zeal he rent his garments, and exclaimed, "What need of other evidence? You have heard the blasphemy from his

own mouth. What is your opinion?" With one voice the whole Council answered, He is guilty of death.

The night being far advanced, the High Priest went out of court, leaving Jesus unprotected and defenceless in the hands of an insolent rabble. There was scarce any kind of barbarous insult, which they did not inflict on the innocent Jesus during the course of the night. They buffeted him, they tore off his sacred hair, they spit upon him, they covered his all-seeing eyes, while others struck him on the face and bade him guess, who it was that struck him. But the deepest wound inflicted on our blessed Lord that night, was that, which he received from the fall of Peter his favoured Apostle. Of all the Apostles Peter had always been the first to profess his faith, and the most forward in expressing a readiness to die for his divine master. He had even made an attempt to defend him in the garden of Gethsemani, he had followed him from thence, though at a distance, into the court of the High Priest. There mixing with the wicked crowd, he forgot his former purposes; there exposed to temptation and regardless of the previous admonition given him by Jesus the evening before, he faltered at the voice of a servant maid, and denied his having any knowledge of the man she spoke of. This public denial of his divine master he repeated no less than three times, and
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in the end confirmed it with an oath. Such was the fatal consequence of neglected prayer, and of too great a confidence in his own fancied strength! His fall, very different from that of Judas, sprung from human weakness, not malice; he therefore rose more quickly than he had fallen. The crowing of the cock immediately after his third denial, reminded him of Jesus's words: he went, out and wept bitterly.

Early in the morning, the Chief-Priests having held a consultation with the Elders and the Scribes, and all that were of the council against Jesus, and finding nothing proved against him in point of doctrine, resolved to carry him before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, as guilty of treason against the state. Bound therefore like a traitor, Jesus was led away from Caiphas's house, and delivered over to a heathen judge. The Chief Priests and Elders with a vast multitude of people there appeared as his accusers. Jesus stood before the governour, and the Elders began to exhibit a long and slanderous charge against him, as though he had been seducing the people from their duty of allegiance, by forbidding them to pay tribute to Cæsar, and styling himself their king. Jesus was silent. Dost thou not hear the charges brought against thee, said Pilate to him? The charges were notoriously false, and Jesus was still silent. Pilate wondered, and going into the hall

of judgment called Jesus after him. Being desirous of clearing up the point, he asked him, if he was king of the Jews? Jesus answered, *I am; but my kingdom is not of this world.* Pilate then went out to the Jews, and declared aloud, that he could find no cause of condemnation in him. But they still insisted, that he had been trying to stir up the people to a revolt over all Judea, preaching sedition through the whole country, as he came along from Galilee to the very city of Jerusalem. At the mention of Galilee, which belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, Pilate thought he had a fair opportunity of freeing himself from a troublesome business; and upon inquiry finding Jesus to be of Galilee, he sent him away to Herod, who was also then in Jerusalem. Herod, who had long wished to see the person, of whom such wonders had been related, put many questions to him, while the Priests and Scribes stood loading him with accusations and imputed crimes. Jesus was wholly silent; so that Herod considered him only as an object of contempt, clothed him with a white garment, and after having exposed him to the mockery of his guards, sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate upon this called together the Chief-Priests, the Magistrates, and people; and began to plead before them in favour of the innocent Jesus. For he plainly saw, that Jewish envy was his only crime. "You have brought this man before me, said he,
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you have charged him with many crimes, but have proved nothing. I have examined, I have interrogated him in your presence, and have not found him guilty of one offence, nor has Herod. I will therefore release him conformably to the custom, which obliges me at this solemn festival to set some one prisoner free, as your choice shall determine. There is in custody a notorious robber called Barabbas, who in a seditious riot has committed murder. Which of the two is it your will I should release?" "Not him, not him, but Barabbas," was the tumultuous cry. "What then shall I do with Jesus replied Pilate?" "Crucify crucify him!" "What evil has he done? I find him guiltless." "It matters not; crucify him, they cried again, and release Barabbas." They grew more loud and clamorous in their demand; Pilate weakly yielded, and the murderer was released.

Pilate having gone thus far to satisfy the mob, though at the expense of justice and against his own conscience, proceeded to greater acts of cruelty and injustice. He had repeatedly declared aloud, that Jesus was wholly innocent of the crimes he had been unjustly charged with; yet as though he had really found him guilty, he sentenced him to a bloody and ignominious punishment, inflicted by the Romans on none but reputed slaves. He ordered him to be scourged. Jesus was therefore led into the Pretor's court, there stripped and tied to a pillar. The whole band of guards gathered

round for his greater ignominy, and the barbarous sentence was executed on him with all the violence, that unfeeling cruelty is capable of exerting. After that the soldiers in derision treated him as a mock king; they wove a crown of sharp thorns and pressed it upon his head; they clothed him with a purple robe, and put into his hand a cane for a sceptre. Then contemptuously bending the knee before him, they hailed him king of the Jews: after which they spit upon him, and taking the cane out of his hand, struck him on the head.

Thus humbled, thus disfigured and abased, Pilate resolved to show him to the people, hoping that the moving sight might induce them to desist from demanding his death. Jesus therefore went forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment, and Pilate said to them, *Behold the man!* Christians, rouse your faith; lift up the eyes of your soul, and with contrition of heart contemplate your suffering Jesus. Behold your Redeemer sorely stricken by the hand of divine justice. Behold the man of sorrows, loaded with your infirmities, scourged and bleeding for your offences! How changed, how fallen is his countenance! His beauty is disfigured, and all his comeliness effaced.* From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, his body is one continued wound. The hard-hearted Jews were not moved: with loud clamours they still insisted upon his death.

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* Isaiah c. liii.

We have a law, they cried, and according to that law he ought to die, *because he has made himself the Son of God.* Shall I then crucify your king, said Pilate? We have no king but Cæsar, replied the Jews, and if thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Pilate was now agitated with double fear, the fear of spilling innocent blood, and the fear of losing Cæsar's favour. Worldly interest prevailed, and he sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

Go forth, my soul, and bathed in tears of sorrow and compassion accompany thy Redeemer to the mountain of Calvary. Spent with the sufferings he had already undergone, see him sinking beneath the burden of his cross, as he is led along. Respectfully approach, take it up, and follow thy Saviour to the mountain. Thou hast thy passions, thou also hast thy evil habits to crucify. Join in the lamentations of the pious women bewailing him in the way, and listen to the address he makes them. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children. For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" If your guiltless Saviour undergoes so much for sin, what must guilty sinners themselves undergo?

Jesus being come to the summit of Calvary entered upon the last most painful and ignominious stage of his bitter passion. He is stript of all his clothes,

clothes, thrown down upon the ground, his sacred hands and feet violently stretched out, and nailed fast to the cross. The cross is then set upright, and fixed in the ground between two other crosses, on which two thieves were executed at the same time. Call forth, my Brethren all the affections of your soul, approach in spirit and behold your divine Redeemer upon his cross, bleeding and agonising for sinful men ! Having dwelt with sorrow and compassion upon his visible sufferings, that meet your eyes, dive into the deep recesses of his sacred heart, and for your instruction consider over the virtues, that reign therein : his humility, his meekness, his obedience, his resignation, his patience, his ardent love for man, and zeal for his Father's glory. The fervour of his zeal, and the great loss of blood, which had been drained out by such a variety of torments in the course of his passion, parched him with a burning heat. He cried out, *I thirst*. A sponge dipped in vinegar was instantly applied to his sacred mouth, not to ease, but to aggravate his pain.

The rage of his enemies was not lessened by his sufferings ; they continued still to insult, to blaspheme and torment him. How sharp, how deep did these insults cut into his sacred heart ? That heart the most tender, the most benevolent, and most kind, that had been ever formed by the hand of omnipotence ! He knew the infinite sanctity of his own divine Person, he knew the bound-

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Jesus desire he had for man's salvation. On the other hand he beheld the height of ingratitude and malice, that resulted from the injuries he received ; the grief he felt on that account, was consequently most bitter. It drew this pathetic exclamation from him : *My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?* Notwithstanding this bitter dereliction and comfortless distress, which he felt within him, he ceased not to comfort his condoling friends that were near. To the penitent thief, his fellow-sufferer on the cross, he says, *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* A consolatory sentence for all patient sufferers under whatever trial or affliction ! Near the cross of Jesus stood Mary his virgin mother, and with her John his beloved disciple. To her he says, *Woman, behold thy Son* ; and to him, *Behold thy Mother.* Thus in the last moments of dying life did Jesus pay that tender regard, which was due to his disconsolate mother, and in the person of St. John he recommended his faithful followers to her maternal care and powerful protection,

The great sacrifice of the cross was now nearly completed. But before he would complete it, Jesus for our example would publicly forgive, and even pray aloud, that his Father also would forgive his enemies. Within his own divine breast only were the motives of mercy and forgiveness to be found : for in his tormentors all was rancour and determined malice. From the garden
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of Gethsemani to Mount Calvary they had pursued him with unremitting virulence. Before all the public tribunals in Jerusalem they had loaded him with false accusations, slanderous reproaches, and ignominious outrages. To Jews and to Gentiles they had represented him as a blasphemer, as a seducer of the people, as a notorious malefactor, as a turbulent and seditious preacher. Nailed hands and feet to a cross, crowned with a wreath of thorns, raised aloft as the most criminal between two thieves, tortured with pain in every sense and in every limb, insulted and blasphemed by the soldiers, by the chief-priests, by the scribes and elders of the people, overwhelmed with grief, and oppressed with sufferings, he cried out, *Father forgive them : they know not what they do.*

All was now accomplished. The scriptures were verified, and prophecy fulfilled. Nothing but the last gasp remained to finish the wonderful work of man's redemption. Jesus Christ had now been three hours in exquisite torture upon the cross: through the numerous wounds he had received, his blood was all drained out, except what the cruel spear was to drain through the wound of his sacred side: life was at its last ebb. It was the ninth hour of the day. The important moment fixed on from eternity for the author of life to die, was at hand. From the sixth hour, when the scene of his crucifixion began, the day had been overcast, and a mournful gloom had spread itself over all the land. The earth trem-
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bled ; the sun grew dark ; the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom ; the rocks split afunder ; the graves gave up their dead ; all nature in fine, except the senseless Jews, seemed to sympathise with its agonising Lord. Spent and exhausted, with a loud voice he exclaimed, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, and saying this he bowed his head and expired.

DISCOURSE X.

UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

The Lord hath truly risen. Luke c. xxiv. v. 34.

WHETHER we contemplate the doleful or the joyful mysteries of our Saviour's life, we shall find they equally concur to the instruction and consolation of mankind. By his passion and bitter death our blessed Lord instructs us, with what humility of heart, with what patience and resignation to the divine will, we are to receive and bear the sufferings incident to human life. By his resurrection from the dead he consoles and at once assures us of the glory we shall reap from our sufferings patiently endured. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is therefore one of those joyful mysteries, which confirms our faith and enlivens our hope in the pursuit of everlasting life.

Soon after our blessed Saviour had expired, his disciple Joseph of Arimathea, went to Pilate and asked him for the body: which being granted, he took it down from the cross the same evening,
and

and conveyed it into a neighbouring garden. There after having wrapt it up with spices in a clean linen cloth, he laid it in his own new funeral monument, which he had cut in the rock. He then closed the mouth of the sepulchre with a heavy stone and departed.

Jesus had often mentioned before his death, that on the third day he should rise again. The Chief Priests and Pharisees well remembered it, and therefore applied to Pilate for a guard, as if they suspected a design in the disciples of stealing away the body, and then saying, that it was raised to life again. Pilate granted their request. They went, and for greater security sealed up the stone, and placed a guard of soldiers round, to prevent every one's coming near till after the third day. But in vain did their fury rage, in vain did envy and malice conspire against the Lord, and against his Christ? He, who dwells in the highest heavens, despised their empty schemes, and turned their malicious designs to their own confusion, even into the very means of manifesting the truth, which they strove to conceal.

For on the third day, early in the morning, the soul of our blessed Saviour, which during the time of its separation had been comforting the souls in Limbo, came to the sepulchre and reuniting itself with his sacred body, he rose by his own divine power from the dead. In that awful moment the
earth

earth shook in testimony of the great event, an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolling back the stone from the mouth of the monument, seated himself upon it. Struck with terror, the guards sunk away like dead men, till recovering themselves by degrees they went into the city and related to the Chief Priests what had happened. The Priests and Elders gave them a large sum of money to say nothing of the real fact, but to rumour it abroad that the disciples of Jesus came in the night and stole away the body, while they were asleep. But the glory of Christ's resurrection, which was soon to blaze out to the admiration of the whole world, was not to be stifled by any such human artifice. It was first proclaimed by the voice of Angels, and on the same day publicly evinced by the living voice of Jesus Christ himself.

About the dawn of day Mary Magdalene and some other devout women repaired to the sepulchre, carrying with them the perfumes they had been preparing to embalm the body of their Lord. They expected to have found him still among the dead. Their great concern, as they went along, was how they should remove the stone, that had been rolled against the mouth of the monument, when coming near they observed the stone was rolled back, and the entrance open. But not seeing the body, they entered the monument, and behold an Angel in the shape of a young man was sitting
on

on the right side robed in white. Struck with surprize, they bowed down their heads and looked astonifhed; upon which the Angel fpoke, and thus faid to them, “ Be not frightened. You feek Jefus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is not here: he is rifen: he lives again. Why do you feek him amongft the dead? Behold the place were they laid him. But go, tell Peter and the other difciples, that he is gone before them, as he promifed, into Galilee, where they will fee him.”

Mary Magdalene in compliance with the Angel’s injun&tion went ftraight to Peter and told him, that the body of Jefus was not to be found. Without waiting to hear any thing more, Peter and John immediately rofe up and haftened to the monument. Mary followed them. When they arrived, Peter, firft and then John went into the monument. They found not the body; they faw nothing but the linen cloths, in which the body had been wrapped. They wondered and departed. The confufed ftate of their minds at that time was fuch, that they did not underftand the Scriptures concerning Chrift’s refurre&tion. For although their blefled Lord had frequently mentioned his refurre&tion to them, although he had confirmed it by the fign of the prophet Jonas, and had exprefly told them,* that the Son of man fhould be delivered into the hands of finful men to be derided, to be fcourged and crucified, but that on the

* Mat. c. xx.

the third day he would rise again, yet to them it still seemed an obscure mystery: and when reminded of these things by Mary Magdalene, and other devout women, they considered their story as an idle fancy, and did not believe them. So incapable is man, when left to himself, of understanding the holy scriptures, and of forming a right judgment of the divine mysteries. But these doubts and this backwardness of belief in the Apostles were permitted by divine wisdom to quicken the belief of others, who in after ages were happily to believe and not see.*

Wherefore to remove all possible doubt concerning the reality of his resurrection, Jesus Christ began to show himself alive to many of his chosen followers, on the very day he rose from the dead. As far as we can gather from the Evangelists, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, who remained weeping and looking for him at the door of the monument. Secondly to the holy women in their return from thence. Thirdly to St. Peter. Fourthly to two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Fifthly to ten of the Apostles assembled together in a room. He suddenly entered while the door remained shut, and standing in the midst of them he said, "Peace be with you. It is I, do not fear. Why are you troubled, and why do such thoughts arise within your breasts? For they were troubled and frightened, and imagined they saw a spirit.

See

* John. c. xx.

See my hands and feet, continued he, feel and see that it is I myself. For a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have." He then showed them his hands and feet, with the wounds and print of the nails still remaining in them. And that no further doubt might remain upon their minds, he condescended to eat with them; he put them in mind of what he had said to them before his death upon the subject of his resurrection, and finally convinced them, that it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, conformably to the predictions, which the ancient Prophets and inspired Psalmist had uttered concerning him.

Of his glorious triumph over death and hell the Prophet Osee* had thus spoken in his name: *O death, I will be thy death. O hell, I will be thy bite. Behold the lion of the tribe of the Judah has conquered, as it is written,† with a strong bite he has broken the iron bars of the gates of hell, and in his might he has trampled death to destruction. I will penetrate into the lower regions of the earth, says Ecclesiasticus,‡ I will view all that sleep and enlighten all that hope in the Lord.* How beautiful, how expressive, and sublime is this language of the inspired writer. It represents our great Redeemer in the midst of victory, surveying the wide regions of the dead, enlightening and calling into life all those, who hope in the Lord. To Him then be glory and empire

* C. xiii. † Rev. c. v. ‡ c. xxiv.

pire for ever and ever. Amen. He is living and was dead. He was slain and has redeemed us unto God by his blood. He is the first-begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth; behold he is alive for ever and ever, and he has the keys of death and of hell.* O death, where is now thy victory? Death, where is thy sting?

The glittering show, which usually furrounds the great during life, vanishes at the approach of death. Stript of their worldly pageantry they sleep with corruption in the silent grave, and mingle with common dust. Jesus Christ, though he yielded to death, suffers no corruption, his sacred body though in the bosom of the earth turns not into dust, but the glory, that seemed to fly from him during his mortal course, blazes round him with unclouded brightness from the tomb. There he puts off all the marks of weak mortality, there he leaves his funeral bands, the trophies of his victory. The transient ignominy of his passion is absorpt in glory. Pain, sorrow, and affliction have lost their sting. Death is disarmed, and no longer holds dominion over him. His sacred humanity, on which our griefs and infirmities once sat so heavy, is now raised to a life of transcendent glory, unchangeable and eternal. Eternal thanks to God, who has thus given us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.† Jesus Christ therefore by his resurrection is our hope, our consolation, and our pattern.

1st. Jesus

* Rev. 1. † 1 Cor. 15. 20.

1st. Jesus Christ is our hope. Blessed be God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, says St. Peter,* who according to his great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For the same divine power, which resuscitated Jesus from the dead, † will also with Jesus resuscitate us to a participation of that incorruptible, of that unfading and everlasting inheritance, which is reserved for us in heaven. Such, my Brethren, is the hope, which all true Christian believers possess in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this hope the Arian has no share; because by denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, he rejects the foundation, on which this hope is built. To this hope the Unitarian renounces his title; because by disbelieving a plurality of Persons in the unity of the divine nature, he overturns in his own mind the whole Christian system, annihilates the work of man's redemption, discards the incarnation, the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Vain then in his opinion must be the preaching of the Gospel, and groundless the hope of any future recompence. To this hope the Materialist has no pretensions, when putting himself upon a level with the brute creation he degrades the dignity of an immortal soul, and meanly fancies it doomed to perish with his body in the same grave. To this hope in fine the Deist lays no claim, when doubting of all, that reason cannot fathom, he affects to reduce the standard

of religion to the airy conceits of his own understanding. Void of the principles of faith he forms no other idea of divine things, than what imperfect reason under the influence of flesh and blood suggests. For the sensual man, says St. Paul,* has no conception of the things, that are of the spirit of God; he neither relishes nor understands them. Full of that earthly wisdom, which is foolishness in the sight of God, he disregards the truths of revelation; too proud to stoop to the simplicity of the Gospel, too self-sufficient to submit his judgment to the principles of faith, and too skilled in false philosophy to adopt the precepts or the practice of religion, he shines for a time in the delusive sphere of infidelity, till like a baleful meteor he vanishes out of sight never to shine again.

2dly. Jesus is our consolation. Sufferings in some shape or other are inseparable from the life of man. Man born of a woman, says holy Job,† lives but a short time, and is filled with many miseries. Those miseries are often heavy and weigh him to the very ground. Groaning beneath the weight, it is natural for him to look out for something to console and support weak nature. He finds it in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who first suffered, before he could enter into his glory. His sufferings were short, his glory is everlasting. Since the prevarication of our first parents, sufferings are become our portion in this vale of tears. They are

* 1 Cor. c. ii. † c. xiv.

are the just punishment of sin committed against a God of infinite perfection. But such is the goodness of God even in his chastisements, that he leaves the sinner free to merit by his sufferings, so as to make them the subject of his future glory. Under this sweet conviction the faithful believer not only patiently, but joyfully submits to whatever sufferings kind Providence is pleased to let fall upon him. *I know my Redeemer lives*, said Job in the depth of his affliction,* *In the last day I shall rise from the earth. I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. This is my hope laid up within my bosom.* The same hope, my Brethren, since our Redeemer is really risen from the dead, shines forth on us with brighter rays of comfort, than it possibly could in those darker ages of remote antiquity. For what Job believed would happen at some distant period, we know by the testimony of holy writ has actually come to pass. Now if the belief of his Redeemer's future resurrection from the dead could ground in that afflicted man so strong a hope of one day sharing in the same glory, how much more powerfully ought the same consolatory thought to act upon the Christian's mind, who beholds in Jesus Christ the promise of a glorious resurrection truly verified? Who by experience as well as by faith is convinced, how quickly his tribulations end, and to what lasting joys they pave the way?

The ways of God with respect to his chosen followers frequently appear mysterious to human eyes: they are always wonderful. Persecution, oppression, tribulation, and suffering, is oftentimes the portion he allots them in his providence. For whom he hath foreknown to be of his elect, as his Apostle teaches,* those he hath also decreed to be made conformable to the image of his Son. And what is the image we discover in his Son, but the image of humiliation, of tribulation, and sufferings, which he has traced out to us from his birth in Bethlehem to his death on Mount Calvary? The picture indeed at first sight seems discouraging and gloomy. But upon a more close examination the colouring will be seen to glow, and to open to us a wide-extended prospect the most cheering and inviting. From the dusky shade of transient afflictions the bright succession of unbounded joys breaks out, and comforts us with the promise, that our short successful struggles for victory shall be rewarded with an everlasting triumph, and that our light and momentary tribulations upon earth shall be crowned with an immensurable weight of glory in heaven. Upon this consideration our blessed Saviour never mentioned the ignominy of his sufferings and death to his Apostles, without assuring them at the same time of his resurrection, that would quickly ensue. The Son of man, said he,† will be betrayed and delivered up into the hands of the chief Priests, of the Scribes, and Gentiles :

* Rom. viii. † Mat. xx.

tiles: he will be insulted, he will be scourged, he will be condemned and crucified: but on the third day he will rise again. Jesus on this ground is therefore stiled the first begotten of the dead,* the first fruits of those, who have slept.† For as by the sin of Adam we had all incurred the guilt of death, so by the power of Jesus Christ we receive life and resurrection from the dead. In the last day the Archangel by sound of trumpet will command the dead to rise, and in the twinkling of an eye all shall be raised in Christ to life again. They, who shall have been animated with his spirit, and shall have borne their share of sufferings with him, shall then also rise to a participation of the same glory, to an everlasting inheritance of bliss, in the same heavenly kingdom. This, my Brethren, is a pleasing hope, an animating and cheering comfort in affliction.

3dly. Jesus is our pattern. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead not only enlivens our hope and consoles our griefs, it likewise instructs and directs our practice in the way of virtue. Christ indeed died for the destruction of sin, but he is risen for our justification. If like living branches grafted on the stock of Christ, we are planted with him after the similitude of his death, as the Apostle speaketh,‡ in like manner shall we be of his resurrection. To divest ourselves of the habit of sin, to shut our eyes to the allurements of sin, and to
die

* Rev. i. † 1 Cor. xv. ‡ Rom. c. vi.

die to the guilt of sin, is the pattern for repentance, shown us from the cross. To rise from sin to a state of grace, from tepidity to fervour in devotion, from a neglect to the practice of Christian duties, is the pattern for a new life, presented to us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For as Christ rose by the glory of the Father, says the same Apostle,* so should we also rise after having died to sin, and begin a new life. Having died once, he dies no more: being now restored to life he lives eternally to God. So do you, my Brethren, look upon yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Be careful to plant the tender shoots of virtue in your souls, and to nourish skilfully their growth, that you may in due season gather their desirable fruit. Being made free from sin by the crucifixion of your former vices and evil inclinations, the fruit you are to reap is sanctification, and the end you are to expect is life everlasting.

Christ rose from the grave not only exempt from all the painful sensations, that are incident to mortal man, but indued moreover with the distinctive qualities of a glorified body. These are *clarity*, *subtily*, *agility*, and *impassibility*. Impassibility is a quality, which exempts the body from corruption, renders it incapable of suffering, and invulnerable by death. Of this quality St. Paul declares the body of our Lord to be possessed, when he tells us,
that

* *Ibid.* c. vi.

* that death no longer has any power over him: Death and the appendages of death hurt him now no more; he is at once invulnerable, incorruptible, and immortal. Agility is a quality, which enables the body to move instantaneously from one place to another, even the most distant, without labour or fatigue. By virtue of this quality our blessed Saviour appeared at different times to his disciples, and as suddenly vanished from their sight.† Subtily is a quality, by which the body penetrates like a spirit, and passes through the most solid substances. Thus while the doors were shut, our blessed Lord unexpectedly entered the room of the Apostles, and suddenly stood in the midst of them.‡ Clarity or brightness is a quality, which diffuses a bright splendour over the whole body, and vests it with light as shining as the sun. Such was the glory, with which our blessed Saviour shone in his transfiguration on Mount Thabor.§

To the pure and immaculate body of Jesus Christ these glorious qualities were undoubtedly due. But to the bodies of the elect they are acquired through him, and granted by a special favour of the divine bounty. I am the resurrection and the life, says he, || Hence this animal body of ours, as St. Paul calls it, ¶ will at the last day rise a spiritual body. From being corruptible it will put on incorruption, and from being mortal it

* Rom. c. vi. v. 9. † Luke c. xxiv. ‡ John c. xx. § Mat. c. xvii.
 || John c. xi. ¶ I Cor. c. xv.

it will put on immortality. Such, my Brethren, is the life, and such the glory, to which our gracious Redeemer raises all those, who seriously endeavour to express these spiritual qualities of a glorified body in the conduct of their lives. This is still the pattern we are to keep constantly in view.

1st. Clarity is the first endowment of a glorified body, and it is manifested in a moral sense by the good example we give to those about us. Integrity of faith, purity of manners, a punctuality in all moral and religious duties constitute its glory. This is the light, which our blessed Saviour commands us so to let shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father, who is in heaven.* By this the sinner is sweetly drawn from his evil courses, his darkness is dispelled, his mind is opened to the eternal truths, his hope is enlivened, and finally his faith is animated into action.

2dly. Subtilty is the second endowment of a glorified body, and in a moral line it is expressed by a firm and steady fortitude of mind, which carries us through every difficulty, that lies before us in our way to heaven. We have our domestic and external enemies to conquer, before we can be entitled to the crown. The enterprise is great, and great obstacles in appearance will undoubtedly occur. That powerful enemies can be subdued with-
out

* Mat. c. v.

out combat, that the kingdom of heaven can be gained without labour, that the narrow gate can be entered without struggle, that the commandments can be kept without exertion, that the duties of religion can be always fulfilled without some temporal inconvenience, is not to be expected. If any one is willing to come after me, says Jesus Christ,* he must deny himself, he must take up his cross and then follow me. Brethren, be not discouraged. Upon trial you will find, that neither the difficulty is so great, nor the cross so heavy, as sickly fancy and faint-hearted sloth would make it. The high rugged mountain, which at a distance seems insurmountable to the desponding traveller, is found upon a nearer view to present a gradual and easy ascent. In your progress towards heaven have but a good will, and in Jesus Christ who strengthens you by his holy grace, you will have the power to do whatever is commanded you. For to him, who does his best, God never refuses grace.

3dly. Agility is the third endowment of a glorified body. In a soul spiritually risen to God by sincere repentance, this quality is manifested by her active zeal for the divine service. Being quickened by the infusion of the holy Spirit, such a soul moves with fervour and alacrity from one duty to another, within the sphere of her Christian vocation. Never weary in the habit of doing
good,

* Mat. c. xvi.

good, she either feels not the labour, that accompanies the divine service, or is delighted with it. With cheerfulness, O Lord, have I run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast dilated my heart.*

4thly. Impassibility is the fourth prerogative of a glorified body. With this quality the soul is spiritually endowed, when fixt in the purpose of a virtuous life she preserves herself inviolate from the contagion of mortal sin. Conscious of the rich treasure she carries in her bosom, she cautiously avoids the occasions, the company, the place, the entertainments and connexions, that might expose her to the danger of being plundered of it. Placed as she is amidst a variety of pleasing objects, she cannot help feeling the impression they make upon her corporal senses. The sensation may flatter or provoke some lurking passion and tempt frail nature to rebel. To be thus tempted is indeed a misery, not to yield will be her glory. Knowing, that without her own consent no temptation can ever hurt her, she prudently sets a guard upon her thoughts, restrains the lively fallies of imagination, and diligently watches the avenues of her heart, lest they should let in the enemy, and betray her to destruction. Such, my Brethren, is the caution, such the wisdom of a Christian, who seriously intends to save his soul. By these means he rises from his former habits

* Psalm cxviii,

habits of sin to a permanent state of grace, the essential requisite of that final resurrection to glory, which he expects through Christ his Saviour, in the last day.

Most gracious Lord, since thou hast been pleased to enliven us with this hope, and to instruct us by thy own example, mercifully grant, that by thee, and with thee, we may rise triumphant over all our enemies, and in the end be found worthy to receive the crown, which thou hast purchased us by thy blood. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XI.

UPON THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God. Mark c. xvi. v. 19.

OUR blessed Redeemer was pleased to remain forty days upon the earth after his resurrection from the dead. The reality of his resurrection was a truth of such important consequence to all his followers, that in his wisdom he judged it necessary to establish it by such proofs, as no rational man could call in question. He frequently appeared to them, sometimes to a few, sometimes to many of them together, and then withdrawing from their presence, he weaned them by degrees from the fond attachment they had to his humanity. He conversed and eat with them, he showed them his wounds still remaining in his hands, feet, and side, he put them in mind of the discourses he had held with them before his crucifixion, and finally instructed them in many things requisite for them to know concerning the kingdom of God, which is his Church.

No.

No doubt of the identity of his person now remaining with his disciples, on the fortieth day he led them forth to a high mountain not far distant from Jerusalem, called the Mountain of Olives. There being upon the point of leaving this lower world, he lifted up his hands and blessed them :* and as he was blessing them, he raised himself gradually from the ground, and mounted in awful majesty through the air towards heaven, they earnestly looking up and adoring, till an intervening cloud received him from their sight. They remaining still fixed in the same place, behold two Angels appeared in white apparel, and said to them, † “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven ? This same Jesus, who is ascended to heaven, will hereafter come in the manner you have seen, to judge the living and the dead.”

Jesus ascended not alone. Besides an innumerable train of the heavenly host, he led with him all those happy souls he had redeemed from Limbo, the immortal trophies of his victory. Of this St. Paul in the words of the Psalmist ‡ thus speaks to the Ephesians, § Christ ascending on high, led captivity captive. He hath distributed his gifts to men Those holy captives had long languished in a state of painful separation from their God, whom they ardently loved, and as ardently longed to see in his kingdom of glory. The day of their delivery at length came. Jesus in his triumph over sin broke their chains asunder,

burst

* Luke c. xxiv.

† Acts c. i.

‡ Psalm lxiv.

§ C. iv.

burst open the brazen gates and the iron bars, that confined them, delivered them from their captivity, and brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.* Sing then to God, ye kingdoms of the earth; sing ye to the Lord; sing ye to God, who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east. God has ascended with jubily, the Lord has ascended with the sound of trumpet. For he, who ascended above all the heavens,† is the very same, who had first descended into this lower world, the only begotten and eternal Son of God in the assumed form of man. He descended to seek and to save that, which was lost,‡ and he has ascended to take possession of that unspeakable glory, which he has acquired by his blood both for himself and us.

Lift up your gates, O ye Princes, exclaims the royal Prophet,§ in a stile truly noble and sublime, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. The Prophet speaks in the name of those ministering spirits, who attended their triumphant Lord in his ascension, and immediately answers in the name of those celestial Guardians, who watched at the gates of heaven, saying: Who is this King of glory? He is the Lord, who is strong and mighty, his attendants reply the Lord, mighty in battle. Wherefore lift up your gates, ye Princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. The heavenly Princes, cautious

as

* Psalm cvi. † Ep. iv. ‡ Luke xix. § Psalm xxiii

as it were how and to whom they opened the gates, which had been shut since Adam's sin against all his race, again ask, who is this King of glory? The others then answer, that he is the Lord of powers, the strong and mighty not in battle only, but in power itself. The Lord of powers he is the King of glory.

Jesus Christ therefore in his sacred humanity according to the scriptures is now raised above all principality and power and virtues, and dominations,* above the highest order of Cherubims and Seraphims, above every name, that is named not only in this world, but in the world to come. Being the splendour of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance,† he sitteth on the right hand of majesty on high, as far above the Angels, as the name he has inherited is exalted above theirs. For to whom of the Angels has the Father at any time said, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." But to the Son he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity. Therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool."

The

* Eph. i.

† Heb. i.

The application of these passages from the royal Prophet thus made, as we see, by an inspired Apostle, leaves no room even for the smallest doubt upon the important truth they convey. They convey the truth of two distinct natures really existing in Jesus Christ: the one divine and eternal, the other human and temporal; the one consubstantial with the Father, the other exalted in glory to the right hand of the Father. When we therefore write or speak of Jesus Christ, it must always be remembered, that we write or speak of him, who is at the same time both God and man, and consequently that the properties of both natures are in the truest sense applicable to him; because he unites them all in the self-same Person. For by becoming man, he underwent no change in his divine nature, which is alway perfect and immutable, but he assumed and united human nature to the divine. Under these two different relations he is at the same time equal to and less than the Father. By his divinity he is equal to the Father, because having with him the same one divine essence, he is also with him the same one God. *I and the Father,** says he, *are one.* By his humanity he is less than the Father, because having taken to himself a human body and human soul, he is in all things except sin, become man, like one of us. Of himself, therefore in this respect, he says, *The Father is greater than I.†*

But

* John c. x. † John c. xiv.

But when Jesus Christ is said to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven, it is not to be understood, that he is confined to that one posture of his body, or that the Father has any hands or any human shape. For God is a pure, incorporeal, and all-perfect Spirit. The image of God, as he is in himself, comes not within the reach of our mortal senses. When the scripture therefore speaks of God, it uses such an imagery of language, as is adapted to our senses, that it may thereby convey to us some imperfect knowledge of those sublime mysteries, which are ineffable in themselves, and incomprehensible to our weak understanding. When we are informed by faith, that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, we are given to understand, that the sacred humanity of our Lord is raised to that height of glory, and to that supreme beatitude, than which there is nothing higher and nothing greater in the whole bliss of heaven: that he moreover holds the same sovereign dominion with the Father over all creatures; because as God he is equal to the Father in power, in wisdom, and in all perfection.

Christ is risen from the dead, and exalted to glory, says St. Peter,* that our faith and our hope may solely be in God. His resurrection from the dead to a state of immortality, and his ascension from earth to heaven, ground in us a firm belief

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* 1 Ep c. i.

and a lively hope, that after the sufferings of this life we shall also rise and be happy with him in everlasting glory. Between his resurrection and ascension Christ would spend no more than forty days on earth, by which he plainly indicates, that we are not to settle our hearts on earthly objects, which we soon must leave, that no true happiness is to be found on earth, that heaven alone is the seat of bliss, and designed for our permanent abode.

Happiness to be true must be lasting and capable of satisfying an immortal soul. Such a happiness this world has not to give. Nothing is permanent under the sun. The world itself is perpetually passing with all, that is desirable in it. Always ready to flatter and foment the passions of men, the world appears generally fair in its promises, but often proves deceitful in the end, often promising what it cannot give, and only giving what is of short duration. The goods it offers contain not the worth they show; they afford some short amusement to the senses, no true contentment to the mind. Deluded mortals spend themselves in running after the gilded toy, which at once excites and mocks their toilsome pursuit. Happiness they fancy is the object they pursue: that object they never overtake. In this earthly vale of tears, where floods of grief and joy swell high and flow by turns, true happiness does not dwell; and though it did, yet man himself could not enjoy it long.

Man

Man lives but a short time, and dies. He springs up like a flower of the field, which remains awhile unnoticed perhaps or neglected, till it fades away and is trodden under foot. Being ever upon the change in his fear and wishes from one thing to another, man enjoys but little, and that little he enjoys not long, before he passes out of life like a shadow, and is seen no more. This my Brethren, has been the lot of all, who have lived before us. We must follow soon. The rich, the gay, the great, whom the world once stiled happy, sleep undistinguished under ground. Their worldly grandeur and all their fancied happiness vanished in a moment like a dream: or if a sepulchral inscription chance to preserve for a while their distinguished dust from oblivion among the living, the earthly monument can contribute nothing to their happiness among the dead.

Riches, honours, and carnal pleasures, are the baits, by which the world decoys the greatest part of mankind into its service. By these it captivates, it flatters, it dazzles the eyes of thousands, but makes none happy. The soul is too exalted in her views to be contented with earthly goods, however precious they may seem. Designed by her bounteous Creator to be eternally happy in a future state, she naturally aspires to that, which can make her so, when all these earthly objects shall exist no more. Of all the things, that are thought great or precious in this vain world, she

discovers none in dignity or worth equal to herself, consequently none, that can equal her pretensions to purer joys, or satiate her longing after more lasting happiness. Being ever upon the search after something more, she is ever restless, until she rests in the center of all good, which is God alone. Immortal in her nature she meets with nothing under heaven either good enough or great enough to fill the heart and satisfy the mind. “ I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, said our blessed Lord.* There, my Brethren, is our place of rest: that is the point we always ought to keep in view: thither all our thoughts and all our actions ought to tend; for there only we are to expect the full completion of our holy desires.

But the sensual man seldom thinks of lifting up his heart to heaven; for his affections are not there. Lulled by deceitful pleasure into an uneasy slumber, he dreams away life with little or no concern for eternity. Attached by habit to those objects only, which are pleasing to flesh and blood, he forms but a slender notion of heavenly things, and has but little relish for the duties of a Christian. There lies his misery. He is a stranger to those internal sweets, to that peaceful calm of conscience, which the virtuous only know. He feels within his soul the corroding want of some absent good,
which

* John xx.

which no indulgence of his senses can ever satisfy. Disappointment or disgust disquiets his mind, nor will conscience suffer him to be at rest as long as he repents not of the sinful habits, to which he has so strongly and so criminally been attached. Of this truth the scripture furnishes an undeniable proof in the parable of the prodigal son, mentioned by St. Luke.* Impatient of restraint, and weary of the good order established in his father's house, the rash youth had no sooner got possession of his fortune, than he rushed out into the wide world to engage in its ruinous vices, follies, and extravagance. He had proposed to himself much happiness. Passion blinded and deceived him. The criminal excesses of a luxurious life soon reduced him to distress and misery. His misery was at once the punishment and conviction of his folly. So incapable are sensual delights of giving what they promise, true happiness!

Riches, though so eagerly sought, are equally fallacious. Riches are undoubtedly a human blessing, and when duly administered productive of great good, though still incapable of making man truly happy. Solomon, the wisest as well as the richest man on earth, witnesses the truth of this assertion. That great king, while his heart was right, had been the favourite of the most High, he abounded with heaps of wealth, he flowed in delights the most exquisite, that riches could procure,

* C. xv.

cure, and he denied himself no enjoyment, that luxury could invent or his heart could covet. But in the midst of all this what did he experience, and what were his sentiments? “Vanity of vanities, says he,* and all is vanity.” Far from being happy, he found himself entangled in many sorrows. For behold all is vanity and affliction of mind. To an unrestrained appetite riches furnish the means of every criminal indulgence, and without great caution lead the possessors of them to destruction. “Go, ye rich, says St. James,† and howl in your miseries, that are coming upon you. Your gold and your silver is rusted; and their rust shall bear testimony against you. You have heaped up for yourselves a treasure of wrath for the last days. You have feasted upon the earth, and nourished your heart in luxuries. No true, no lasting happiness is there.

Power, titles, and worldly honours, the glittering objects of ambition, are equally incapable of contenting the mind of man. The crown even of kings, which shines so bright to the beholder’s eye, sits often heavy upon the head, that bears it. Care, solicitude, and restless desire is the usual portion of those who are thought happy, and therefore envied by a mistaken world. Some disappointment, or the fear of a disappointment damps the enjoyment of the present hour, while ambition goads them on in the pursuit of some distant object, which they are anxious, but not likely to attain. The proud king of Babylon said in his heart,‡ I will
mount

* Eccl. ii. † C. v. ‡ Isaiah c. xiv.

mount into heaven, above the stars of God I will exalt my throne, I will sit upon the mountain of the covenant on the side of the north, I will raise myself above the height of the clouds, and be like the Most High. Vain, O Lucifer, and impious is thy boast. Thou shalt be pulled down from thy towering greatness, thou shalt sink into the grave, into the very depth of the pit, says the Lord of Hosts. Thy pride shall be lowered unto hell, thy sceptre shall be broken, the very name of Babylon shall be blotted out: under thee the moth shall be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering. Such is the downfall of all earthly happiness, which has not virtue and religion for its support.

Aman,* the haughty and potent minister of Aſuerus, had been raised by royal favour to the highest dignities that a Persian monarch could lavish on a subject. But because a poor Jew refused to rise and bow to him, as he went in and out of the palace, he found no satisfactory enjoyment in them. Rage and resentment filled his heart. He considered all his great preferments as nothing, while he beheld Mardochai sitting at the king's gate. So little fitted are the highest honours to give happiness to man, when the most trifling circumstance is capable of ruffling the mind, and embittering his thoughts! Ye sons of men, cries the Psalmist,† how long shall the love of this vain world have the ascendancy in your affections?

To

* Esther c. v. † Psalm iv.

To what purpose do you waste your time, your rest, and peace of mind, in quest of what you know will deceive and cheat you in the end? How long will you toil with heavy heart after fleeting vanity? Why do you turn from the pure chrystal spring of rational devotion, and impotently strive to slake your thirst in the intoxicating streams of giddy dissipation? Seek then a happiness, such as this vain world can neither give nor take away. Seek the happiness, which a God of infinite goodness has prepared for you in heaven; a happiness complete in the fullest measure of pure delights, immense, eternal.

The kingdom of heaven is compared by our blessed Saviour to a precious treasure.* For it is a treasure of most perfect bliss glowing in the bosom of the Divinity. It is a rich collection of every joy, and of every pure delight, that the soul can possibly desire. This is the seat of happiness, the place of everlasting rest, which our blessed Lord assured his disciples he was going to prepare for them.† Wherefore lift up your thoughts, my Brethren, to those happy mansions, contemplate the glory that awaits you there, quicken your hope, and be not sluggish in your endeavour to obtain it. If you are spiritually risen with Christ, you will consequently seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. You will therefore mind the things, that are
above,

* Mat. c. xiii † John c. xiv.

above, as the Apostle admonishes,* and not the things, that are upon the earth. For your life is hidden with Christ in God.

To a Christian, who has leisurely considered the duration and extent of the joys of heaven, all earthly goods will appear as insignificant, as a few grains of sand compared with the richest gems. They will consequently engross no more of his attention, than the duties of his station in life require, and will by him be no otherwise employed or sought after, than is subservient and conducive to his last end. To that end he wisely will direct his thoughts, words, and deeds, knowing that God is a just and faithful rewarder of all good. Where his Redeemer is, there he also hopes to be. There is his treasure, there his heart is fixed, there his desires and best affections meet.

To draw our attention as well as to animate our zeal in the pursuit of this last end, Jesus Christ assures us,† that in his heavenly Father's house there are many mansions; so that each one shall have a place suited to his deserts, and each one shall enjoy and see God in a degree more or less extensive, according to the greater or less diligence he employed on earth in God's service. In heaven therefore each one shall rank not according to the partial

* Col. c. iii. † John c. xiv.

tial distinction of worldly titles, but according to the degree of holiness he has acquired in the fight of God. Under this persuasion the Saints have all stretched forward with a holy emulation in the course of virtue, that they might not only secure, but increase the crown they hoped for. In the same proportion as they measured out their services to God, to them has God measured out his glory in return. Crowned with glory they shine in their respective degree of merit with the light of God himself, and they shall continue so to shine like stars for all eternity. Short indeed were their labours, but everlasting is their reward. Now as one star differs in brightness from another star, so shall the blessed in heaven differ one from another in their brightness of glory, each one shining with a lustre peculiar to himself; because to each one it will be given according to his works.* To all and every individual the Majesty of God will be revealed in full splendour. They all shall see him, but some more clearly than others, face to face. From this clear sight and knowledge of God's inexhaustible perfections, such a torrent of delights will for ever flow and fill their souls, as no mortal tongue can express and no heart conceive. Hence their joy will be every way complete; their happiness will be always full without measure and without end.

In this mortal state the happiness of man is always imperfect, because it is measured out to him

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* Mat. c. xvi. v. 27.

by parcels, by a necessary succession of moments in broken intervals of enjoyment, and is therefore never equal to the insatiable desires of his heart. But in heaven the glory of the blessed is poured out in one perpetual overflow of delights, which admits no division of time, no interruption of enjoyment, no diminution of bliss. God by nature is one supreme, immense, eternal, and indivisible perfection, in which all happiness, all beauty, all wisdom, all goodness, all sanctity, and power essentially center. To this center of unbounded happiness our souls naturally tend, thither by the impulse of divine grace they incessantly aspire, there the moment they enter heaven, they eternally repose. There they possess God wholly and entirely, and in possessing God they at once possess an eternal, an immense, and indivisible weight of unspeakable glory. For as the perfections of God can undergo no change or division, and as the immensity of God has no bounds, and the eternity of God no end, the blessed in heaven by possessing God, consequently possess a good, that is immense, immutable, and eternal.

The measure of their happiness, as far as their limited nature will allow, is no other than the immensity of God, and the duration of their happiness is no less than the eternity of God: therefore in each moment they enjoy a whole eternity of bliss. Hence their bliss will be always full, because it will always satiate the soul: their bliss will be
 always

always fresh, because it will never cloy : their bliss in fine will be always present, because it will be never interrupted. No pain, no grief, no solicitude, no fear, nor any other evil whatever shall approach those happy mansions, where nothing but the sound of gladness is ever heard, and nothing but what delights will be ever seen. To God and to the Lamb, who was slain for our redemption and is now alive, joyful canticles of praise shall for ever charm the ear, while the light of God himself shall be a perpetual source of fresh joy, and of fresh transport to the soul. How will the soul then bless the God, who made her, the God, who redeemed her, the God, who sanctified and fitted her for such happiness? With what ecstasies of holy joy, and with what flames of seraphic love she will then glow, we better can imagine than express.

Such, my Brethren, is the prospect we have before us. Such is the glory, such the crown, which a God of infinite perfection has prepared for us. To give us a title to it Jesus Christ has laid down his life : to animate our hope he has already taken possession of it. But to make that title efficacious we must co-operate with his grace, and give something of our own. What must we give? My son, says Almighty God,* give me thy heart. It is no great thing ; yet he asks no more. It is too small to be divided : he demands the whole. Let us then
serve

* Prov. c. xxiii.

serve and love God with our whole heart, and heaven is our own. Were the effusion of our blood or the sacrifice of life required, weak nature might be shocked ; or if great and heroic deeds were necessary to gain heaven, most men might excuse themselves upon the plea of having neither the opportunity nor abilities for such exertion. Such exertion in the common course of things is exacted from no man. But every man has it in his power to sanctify his soul and to gain heaven by the assistance of divine grace, which to the sincere Christian is never wanting. By the sweet disposition of divine Providence sanctity is annexed to the daily duties of a Christian life. Of this a sound and solid faith is the foundation ; of this a general good intention and a moral diligence to fulfil the duties of our respective state is the consummation.

But if in the execution of this glorious work we have any contradiction, any extraordinary labour or difficulty to undergo, what an encouragement, and what a comfort will it be to know, that every step we take in God's service, that every pain we feel, that every sigh we draw, that every effort we make upon a proper motive, is noticed by an all-seeing God, and recorded in the book of life to our account? What shall then deter us from the service, and separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall temptation, shall the world, shall tribulation, shall adversity or suffering from the world? No,
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my Brethren ; nothing shall effect so fatal a separation. There is nothing in the world, that can be set in balance with the future glory, which we hope through the merits of Jesus Christ our Redeemer will be one day revealed in us.

DISCOURSE XII.

UPON THE HOLY GHOST THE COMFORTER.

The Holy Ghost the Comforter will teach you all things.

John c. xiv. v. 26.

TO complete the work of man's redemption it is necessary that the sanctifying grace of God's holy Spirit be likewise added to the merits of our divine Redeemer. For unless a man be born anew by water and the Holy Ghost,* he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. I tell you the truth, says our blessed Saviour to his disciples, † it is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you, that he may remain with you for ever. ‡ He is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, and when he comes, he shall bear testimony concerning me. For he will teach you all truth, and will enlighten your minds, so as to make you see and understand the sublime truths I have already taught you.

From

* John c. iii. † C. xvi. ‡ C. xiv.

From this clear testimony of holy writ it is evinced, and it is what the Catholic Church from the beginning has uniformly believed and taught, that the Holy Ghost is the third Person of the most blessed Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is with them both equally adored and glorified. For to him is communicated wholly and substantially the same divine nature, which eternally subsists in the Father and the Son, and therefore with them he is the same supreme individual God, eternal and infinite in all perfection. For as the knowledge so likewise is the love, which God has of himself, immutable and immense without beginning and without end. This the increated and self-existing Spirit of God, who in his unbounded search comprises all things, even the unfathomable depths of the divine essence, as St. Paul assures us.*

This is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, according to Isaiah, † the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety. His absolute perfections are identically the same as those of the other two divine persons. For all things, whatsoever the Father hath, are mine, says our blessed Lord. ‡ I and the Father are one; § and the Three, who gives testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, are one. § This then is the divine Spirit, by the breath of whose

* Cor. c. ii. † C. i. ‡ John c. xvi. § c. x. § John c. v.

whose mouth, as the Psalmist speaks,* the heavens were first ranged in that beauteous order, in which they still shine and move. He therefore is the Almighty Lord and sovereign creator of all things. He is the vivifying Spirit, as Ezechiel witnesses,† that directs and animates the ministering Cherubims in their attendance upon the Almighty. He is the Spirit, that has spoken by the Prophets, that has inspired the sacred writers, that remains for ever with the Catholic and Apostolic Church,‡ to preserve and teach her all truth§ through every age, to the end of the world. In the latter days, saith the Lord,¶ I will pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh, upon my servants and my handmaids, and they shall prophesy, and proclaim over all the earth the wonderful works of God.

The infused gift of tongues, the gift of foretelling things to come, the gift of working prodigies and wonders is a privilege, which the Holy Ghost has at times imparted to a chosen few of true believers, for the greater glory of God and the special benefit of those, who witness and behold them. But these external operations of the divine Spirit have no necessary connexion with the infusion of those interior graces, which give spiritual life and sanctity to the soul. To cleanse our souls from sin, to enlighten our minds, to warn the will with devout affections, and to invigorate our endeavours

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* Psalm, xxxii † C. i. ‡ John c. xiv. § c. xvi. ¶ Acts, c. ii.

in the pursuit of virtue, is the invariable effect of sanctifying grace, and a pure gift of the Holy Ghost, denied to none, who do their best to deserve it.

To make us sensible of these spiritual effects, which the Holy Ghost works in the souls of the faithful, he is in various parts of the sacred writings marked out to us under the outward figures of water, of a dove, of wind and fire. Soft as a gentle shower he sweetly infuses himself into the souls of the faithful, or like a living fountain pours his cleansing streams of grace through the channel of the holy sacraments to wash them from the stain of sin. I will pour out clean water upon you, says the Almighty,* and you shall be cleansed from all your filth, and I will put my Spirit in the midst of you. By his secret inspirations he draws the repenting sinner from his wonted haunts of noise and dissipation, and teaches him to moan like the dove, in domestic retirement for his past offences. In this sense the Apostle tells us,† that the Spirit himself asketh for us with expressible groans. Thus like the wind, which breathes where it will,‡ sometimes in gentle breezes, and sometimes in rushing blasts, he cools by degrees the heat of glowing passion, and bends into duty the stubborn heart of sinners. Thus in fine like fire he warms the heart with holy desires, and kindles in her an ardent zeal for God's service.

Wind

* Eze. c. xxxvi. † Rom. viii. ‡ John iii.

Wind and fire were the palpable emblems, in which the Holy Ghost appeared to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. About the third hour of the day a noise from heaven, says St. Luke,* was suddenly heard, like that of a strong rushing wind, which filled the house they were sitting in. At the same instant there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, which rested over the head of each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Being thus endued with strength from above, the Apostles were in a moment changed into other men. Trembling no longer under the apprehension of suffering for their faith, and no longer awed by the threats of men, they followed the divine impulse and began to speak in different languages to the wondering people, as the Holy Ghost inspired. They, who had pusillanimously abandoned or denied their master in the hour of danger, and had since concealed themselves for fear of being known for his disciples, now rushed forth into the open streets of Jerusalem, and there publicly proclaimed the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Struck with astonishment at the things, which they heard and saw, and pierced moreover with a lively sorrow for their sins, about three thousand souls immediately embraced the Christian faith, and being baptised, were likewise blessed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Being fully convinced

* Acts ii.

of the sacred truths they heard, they wholly turned their minds to the practice of those religious duties, which the Apostles taught them. Perfect charity amongst themselves, fervent prayer and a persevering attention to the divine service, attested the sincerity of their hearts and the truth of their belief. With cheerful harmony they communed together, unanimously praising God, and taking their repast with gladness and simplicity of heart. The greater glory of God being their only aim, they had no private interest to pursue, no selfish passion to gratify : the advantage of riches and temporal possessions they thought no otherwise desirable, than as it enabled them to do good to their poorer Brethren.

These were the virtues, that adorned and sanctified the first Christians ; they were accompanied with the shining gifts of tongues and other miracles. To strike the senses, to wake the attention, and to rouse the faith of an unenlightened world, such prodigies were then requisite. Other motives of credibility more obvious and more lasting now offer themselves to our reason, in testimony of the Christian truths. The frequency of miracles has therefore ceased in these latter days. But although the holy Spirit is not pleased in the ordinary course of things to exhibit to our senses such striking proofs of his working power, yet it is not to be doubted, but he silently produces the same wonderful

derful effects of grace in a soul, that has the happiness to receive him.

The Charity of God, says St. Paul to the Romans,* is diffused into our hearts by the holy Spirit, which has been given to us. By the infusion of that sanctifying grace, which we received at baptism, our souls were cleansed from sin, and became the living temples of the Holy Ghost. They were then invested with the robe of innocence and sanctity, with which our first parents had originally been endowed; they were then enriched with the gifts of infused virtues, and by adoption became entitled to the kingdom of heaven. The radical virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as so many inherent qualities, were then planted in us, and during the years of infancy remained waiting as it were for the dawn of reason to produce their respective acts. The tender mind opened by degrees, and being illumined by the quickening rays of grace, became sensible of a supernatural happiness which it was taught to hope and pray for. Formed by the early care of parental piety, the understanding began to acquire some knowledge of the mysteries of faith, and the will was gradually initiated in the great Christian duty of serving and loving God above all things. Such, my Brethren, is the charity, which our heavenly Father has displayed in favour of us his adopted sons, and such are the gifts, which the Holy Ghost infused

* C. v.

infused into our souls, even at a time, before we were fully capable of knowing the value of them.

Let us then with gratitude adore the divine goodness, which without any merit on our part has thus distinguished us preferably to thousands of our fellow mortals, who have been less favoured, though not less deserving than ourselves. In the second place let us look back and examine what use we have made of the divine gifts; whether we have improved or squandered them away; whether we have honour or disgrace, reward or punishment to expect in consequence. In the third place let us review the present disposition of our souls, that by comparing the general tenour of our conduct with the principles of faith, we may be enabled to judge, whether the Spirit of God still dwells within us, or whether we have banished him from our breasts. For if the Spirit of God dwells in you, says St. Paul,* he will vivify your mortal bodies; he will influence the body of your actions, and inspire you with such sentiments, as actuate the sons of God. How far we are actuated by the holy Spirit of God, we must judge by the care we take of profiting by his precious gifts. For the Holy Ghost never fixes his abode in us but he brings his gifts along with him.

His gifts, according to Isaiah,† are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety,
and

* Rom. viii.

† C. xi.

and the fear of our Lord. By these gifts we are enlightened to know, and powerfully incited to fulfil every part of our Christian duty. The fear of our Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and it puts us always upon our guard not to provoke his dreadful wrath. Piety prompts us to a devout and diligent performance of every religious duty. Knowledge teaches us the nature and force of our Christian obligations. Fortitude carries us through every difficulty that occurs in the execution of them. Counsel discovers to us the deceitful arts of our spiritual enemies. Understanding opens our minds to the sublime truths of revelation. Wisdom in fine directs us in the pursuit of our last end, which is the full and everlasting possession of God in his glory. This sublime, this noble end, for which we have been created, the enlightened Christian keeps constantly in view, lest he chance to fail in the attainment of it.

Thus, my Brethren, does the Holy Ghost by his infused gifts direct and strengthen his faithful servants in the way of salvation. Under this divine influence the fervent Christian's study is to know and do the will of God in all things, to revere the sacred mysteries of faith, to conform in practice to the dictates of his belief, and prudently to guard against the delusive charms of a false imposing world. Hence the studied knowledge of himself and God creates in him an equal diffidence of his own strength, and a firm reliance

on

on the divine assistance. Hence arises on one hand a filial fear of offending God by sin, and on the other an earnest desire of obtaining those heavenly succours, which are necessary to support him in the day of trial. Hence in fine that Christian fortitude of mind, that unshaken attachment to every point of duty, which is obtained by prayer, and nourished by the unction of fervent piety.

Happy would it be, if the great body of Christians were animated by this holy Spirit. For notwithstanding their profession, all do not obey the gospel, as St. Paul tells the Romans,* all do not adopt its maxims, nor fulfil its precepts. As though they had never engaged in their Creator's service, and never had renounced either the pomps or works of Satan, we see them busily employed in following and promoting what they solemnly abjured at the font of baptism. Heedless of their promise they contract a friendly familiarity with a sinful world, they blindly run into the wild extravagancies of an expensive world, they glitter in the gorgeous pomps of pride, and wantonly vie with one another in their profusion of vanity and show. For all, that is in the world, says St. John,† is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

By the world, here mentioned by St. John, is undoubtedly meant the great bulk of mankind, who

* C. 2

† 1 Ep. c. ii.

who under the influence of corrupt nature seem to have no other than the present gratification of their earthly appetites in view, and to seek no other than a temporary happiness in the transient enjoyment of created goods: who blinded by selfish passions, and deceived by the shining appearances of false honour, concur as it were by general consent in setting up a common system of thinking and of acting according to certain principles of their own, in contradiction to the doctrine of the gospel and spirit of Jesus Christ. This is the world, against which our blessed Saviour has pronounced the severest woes by reason of its scandals; * this is the world, which he will convict of sin; † this is the world, for which he did not pray. ‡ But notwithstanding the woes which an unerring wisdom has pronounced against the world, its spirit is not broken, nor its influence on the minds of deluded Christians yet lessened. It continues still to war against the Almighty, it still spreads its baleful empire far and wide, to the manifest destruction of faith and morals, and drags the greater part of Christians captive into sin. Pleased with the splendid yoke, Christians become the willing slaves of sin, the devoted victims of fashion, of extravagance, and excess: without so much as a single day, or perchance a single hour being allotted for devotion and serious reflection, they whirl from one scene of dissipation to another, and amidst the hurry of amuse-

* Mat. xviii.

† John xvi.

‡ c. vii.

amusements forget they have either souls to save, or a God to serve.

Such, my Brethren, is the world in general. Many Christians there also are, who having been once enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and still retaining some imperfect notions of their baptismal obligations, awkwardly divide their service between the world and God, and vainly strive to court the friendship of the one, without breaking with the other. As if it were not impossible* to serve two different masters at the same time, they bow sometimes to one and sometimes to the other; or as if God were not to be loved with their whole heart, they divide their affections between the Creator and his creatures, falsely fancying themselves acquitted of their whole duty by the imperfect performance of it in part only. Being unfortunately guided by worldly prudence, which is folly in the sight of God, and miserably led away by the attraction of bad example, they are deaf to the voice of good instruction, and shut their eyes against the light, which points out the path of salvation to them. Thus forming to themselves an erroneous rule of conduct conformable to the mode and spirit of a philosophic age, they set aside the practical injunctions of the gospel, which they once were taught and once believed to be essential to true Christian piety. Their thoughts being chiefly turned, and their minds being strongly bent upon the fashionable dissipations of life, to dissipation

* Mat. vi.

tion and to fashion they devote their time, their study, and their incomes, at the expence of health and almost every domestic virtue. The business of salvation is the least of their concern, or at most considered only as the secondary object of their views. The duty of morning and evening prayer is consequently neglected: serious and pious reading, recollection of spirit, self-examination, and devout use of the holy sacraments, are set aside, as gloomy occupations and irksome restraints.

In souls like these the sacred motions of the Holy Ghost are no sooner felt than stifled: the spirit of the world prevails, and all preparation for a future state is criminally neglected. Hence the light of divine faith shines but faintly upon their understanding, and though it still kindles in the mind a general belief of all the sacred truths, which the Church of Christ believes and teaches, yet it is but a speculative and barren belief, which makes no impression upon the will, and produces not the works of salvation. Hence they become strangers to the knowledge of heavenly things, they follow no counsel but their own, they deceive themselves by false conceits, they will not be directed in the ways of God, nor attend to those practices of piety, which should render them habitually devout and obedient to God. Hence being deprived of those special graces, which ease the burden and sweeten the labours of the divine service, they groan beneath the weight of God's commandments,

mandments, and fancy it too heavy for flesh and blood to bear. Hence being destitute of that true wisdom, which teaches men to act consistently with their belief, they either forget their last end, or criminally quit the path that should lead them to it. They therefore walk like blind men, says the Prophet Sophonias,* because they have sinned against the Lord. They are of the world, and of the world they speak; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Numerous, my Brethren, is the class of Christians, who speak and act upon such principles. It behoves each one to take an impartial review of himself from time to time, to search the winding recesses of his heart, and to see by what spirit he is led in the general tenour of his conduct, whether by the principles of divine faith, or by the dictates of human wisdom: whether an eternal or a temporal interest, whether heavenly or earthly joys are the object of his pursuit: whether he has God or the world in view, whether he seeks the divine glory or his own in what he undertakes, whether in his daily actions it be his aim and intention to do the will of God or his own, to gratify self-love or to sanctify his soul, to provide in fine for the present life or the next. What are his acts of devotion to God? What are his works of Charity and benevolence to men? Is he steady and faithful in the discharge of his Christian duty, when temptations

temptations occur, and difficulties start up before him ?

For in the course of a virtuous life many difficulties must necessarily occur ; rough and narrow is the path, through which we have to pass ; many restraints are laid upon the desires of corrupt nature, and many holy practices are to be observed, which an accommodating world pays no attention to. On many occasions God commands one thing, the world another. For as they have different interests and different ends in view, so different also are the means they use, and different is the service they require from their respective followers : consequently no one can serve them both. To our service God has a sovereign right, the world has none. For the reward of our service God promises an everlasting happiness, the world boastingly offers what it cannot give. God by granting us a rational use of the creatures, which he has ordained for our benefit and his own greater glory, encourages us to serve and love him as our chiefest good ; the world by pampering our passions, and flattering our senses to excess, seduces us by degrees into its evil ways, while under the deceitful show of present happiness it hurries its crowding followers through the broad road to everlasting misery.

Wherefore

Wherefore let us review the present disposition of our hearts, and since we profess ourselves to be true adorers of the Most High, let us see by what spirit we are animated, and with what fidelity we act in his holy service. If upon examination we find, that by past irregularities we have given subject of sorrow to the holy Spirit of God, as St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians,* let us speedily repent: with an unfeigned purpose of amendment let us confess our guilt, and seriously strive to obtain forgiveness for it: with the humble sentiments of David let us sue for mercy, and earnestly beg of God to create a clean heart within us, and to renew a right spirit within our souls. For this end let us bend our knees with St. Paul,† before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that according to the riches of his glory he may give us inward strength by his Spirit to become steadfast in goodness, that Christ may dwell within our hearts by faith, and that being rooted and well-grounded in charity, we may abound in the grace of God and be filled with the unction of his holy Spirit.

Come, then, O holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of thy purest love. Banish from our hearts every inordinate desire, cleanse our souls from the dregs of sin, and sanctify them with thy heavenly graces. For from thee, who art the source of sanctity itself, every precious grace, and every perfect gift descends. Thou art our refuge in dis-
tress

* C. iv. † Eph. iii.

trials, our light in darkness, our support in difficulties, and our comfort in affliction. Help us therefore, O God, in our wants, enlighten us in our doubts, encourage us in our fears, warm us in our devotions, and confirm us in our purpose of a virtuous life, that after a happy death we may be admitted to see and enjoy, to adore and love thee in thy heavenly kingdom for evermore.

DISCOURSE XIII.

UPON THE OBLIGATION OF KNOWING JESUS CHRIST.

This is life everlasting, that they know thee, the only true God, and whom thou hast sent Jesus Christ.
John, c. xvii. v. 3.

MAN has but to know himself, and he will know there is a God. By considering the contingency of his own existence he will know there is a self-existing God, that made him. For having been once nothing, he will see, that he might have remained so still, that from himself he could never have begun to exist, that he has consequently received his existence from that supreme and independent Being, who has had no beginning. From the visible beauties of the creation, that surround him, he will by reflection come to the knowledge of the invisible Creator of them, so as to confess the wisdom, the power, the goodness, and boundless perfection of his divinity in the wonderful works he has wrought.* By viewing
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* Rom. i.

the stated seasons of the year, the regular succession of day and night, the unvariable motion of the sun, moon, and stars, the whole harmonious system in fine of the universe, he will observe, that this great Creator of all things is a lover of order, that he has established order amongst all his works, and has fixed the laws, by which he sweetly rules and governs all his creatures. Hence the rational and enlightened man will undoubtedly conclude, that he also has certain laws and precepts to observe, that he has his sphere allotted him wherein to move, and that by a due subordination to the powers, which providence has placed above him, he is to honour and glorify the God, to whose divine bounty he is indebted for all he has.

But to deserve life everlasting, something more than the bare knowledge of a supreme Being is absolutely required of us. For he, who cometh to God, says St. Paul,* must believe not only that he is, but that he moreover is the rewarder of those, who seek him. Hence necessarily springs the knowledge of God's infinite justice and mercy in the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue. To escape the one and to obtain the other, we then must know the end, for which God has ordained us, we must know the means, to which the attainment of that end is annexed, we must be faithful in fine in the performance of all those christian duties, without which we can form no just title to

the kingdom of heaven. Of the unspeakable joys of heaven, for which we have been created, of the adorable Trinity of Persons in one undivided nature of the Godhead, of the temporal incarnation of the eternal Son of God for our redemption, and of all the other divine truths, which come not within the reach of our senses, we can have no other knowledge, than what God has been pleased to reveal. That this knowledge may profit us unto life everlasting, we must receive it with a firm faith, grounded on the infallible word of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived. The obligation then of knowing Jesus Christ, through whom all the divine truths of Christianity have been revealed, is strictly incumbent upon all, who aspire to everlasting life.

Religion, as it forms one complete system of faith and morality, is considered by St. Paul* as a stately edifice, raised by the hand of God for the spiritual habitation of his holy Spirit, of which Christ Jesus himself is the chief corner-stone. On him, as the only foundation of all true sanctity, our hope of salvation is firmly built. For no one, says the same Apostle to the Corinthians,† can lay any other foundation but that which is already laid, which is Christ Jesus. Therefore for the attainment of everlasting life‡ it is as essential for us to know and to believe in Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer, as it is to know and believe in

* Eph. ii. † 1 Cor. iii. ‡ John xvii.

in the one only and true living God. For there is no salvation in any other,* neither is there any other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can be saved. Now as every rational man cannot but wish to be happy, he must also be naturally eager to know, what will make him eternally so. And what is it? It is to know Jesus Christ. To possess ourselves of this sublime, of this important, and of this necessary knowledge for salvation we must know, what Jesus Christ is by nature, and what he is by office in the work of our redemption.

Jesus Christ in one and the same person unites two natures, the human and divine. Jesus Christ therefore by nature is both God and Man. His Person is divine; he is the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, and is eternal. Were he only God, he could not have died nor redeemed us by his sufferings. For God in his divine nature is immortal and incapable of suffering. Or were he only man, neither his sufferings nor his death could have been accepted as an adequate satisfaction to the divine justice for the atonement of our sins. But St. Paul assures us,† that we are now justified by his blood, and reconciled again to God by the death of his Son. The merits therefore of the Son of Man being united with the sanctity of the Son of God, their value was infinite, and Jesus Christ has thereby fully expiated the guilt of sin and obtained our pardon.

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* Acts iv. † Rom. v.

To ascertain the divinity as well as the humanity of Jesus Christ, we have but to inform ourselves of those undoubted truths, which he has been pleased to reveal concerning himself in the holy Scriptures. If by faith we ascend with the inspired Evangelist to the inaccessible light of the Most High, to the great Holy of Holies, we shall find him in the bosom of the eternal Father, without beginning and without end, in the full glory of his immutable existence, not made nor created, but begotten before all ages, the splendour of his Father's glory and the figure of his substance.* He is the divine Word, whose existence is with God from eternity, he is God himself,† by whom all things have been made. Then if we turn our eyes from heaven and look down upon Nazareth, at the time that the angel Gabriel was sent thither by God to confer with the Virgin Mary about the mystery of the Incarnation,‡ we shall find the same eternal Word made man in the pure womb of Mary, and dwelling in human form amongst us. Jesus therefore from the time of his Incarnation has added in himself the nature of man to the nature of God; consequently he is truly God and truly man. He is necessarily God from all eternity; for God can have no beginning. But he is freely man, and that only since the time of his conception by the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost. For it was not by necessity, but by choice, that he descended from heaven and became man.

The

* Heb. i. † John i. ‡ Luke i.

The choice, my brethren, was singular and wonderful. By that singular choice the Son of God descended from his throne of glory, and clothing himself with the lowly form of human nature entered into this vale of tears to lead a suffering and painful life, which he was to close with an ignominious death. What could be his motive for determining on such a choice? It was his love for man. God has so loved the world, says St. John, * as to give his only begotten Son for its redemption. Man had been originally created by him in a state of perfect innocence with a title to a supernatural reward in heaven on the sole condition of observing but one single precept. But the first man by an abuse of his free will transgressed that precept, and thereby forfeited his original title to heaven without the possibility of recovering it again by any atonement he himself could make. The whole human race was therefore plunged into the depth of miseries, wallowing in corruption and groaning for ages under the tyranny of sin, till Jesus by the impulse of his own infinite mercy was pleased to become our Saviour, our Mediator, and Redeemer. Legions of Angels had also sinned, but such mercy from their Creator they have not found. Hurlled down in the blossom of their pride from heaven into the burning lake, they lie ingulfed in endless torments without the smallest hope of redemption. To immortal spirits, the once shining lights of heaven, is refused that grace of mercy,

which

* which has been granted us. How great, how singular, my brethren, is this grace of predilection? How wonderful is the preference? We had done nothing and we could do nothing to deserve it. Eternal thanks then be to the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, who has thus rescued us from the jaws of perdition by Jesus Christ his only Son our Redeemer.

The inestimable grace of redemption being thus gratuitously reserved for lost man, as the Scriptures testify, in preference to the fallen Angels, it behoves us next to consider what it has cost Jesus Christ to ransom our souls from sin. For the price he has given infinitely exceeds the most valuable treasures of the whole earth, it is nothing less than his own most precious blood plenteously spilt with every mark of the kindest goodness and fatherly affection. Now if the bare ransom of our souls has been so highly rated by the eternal wisdom itself, it is evident the salvation of them is too precious and too interesting to be neglected by us. Let us give thanks to God the Father, says St. Paul,† who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath transplanted us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption by his blood, who is the image of the invisible God. For by him were made all things in heaven and on the earth, visible and invisible.

* 2 Peter ii. † Col. i.

fible. All things were made by him and in him ; he is before all, and all things subsist in him. He is also the head of his body the church, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For in him it hath seemed good, that all fulness should inhabit, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace by the blood he shed upon his cross. And you also hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh by death, to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before him, provided you continue faithful and settled in the truth, which has been preached to you.

Therefore it was not by the bare union of human nature to the divine, nor by the tears he shed in Bethlehem, nor by the blood he spilt at his circumcision, at his scourging at the pillar, or at his crowning with thorns, that Jesus Christ was pleased to consummate the work of man's redemption. The effusion of all his blood to the last drop upon a disgraceful cross he deemed not too much for the ransom of our souls. How precious, exclaims St. Austin,* is the price, which our blessed Lord has given for the redemption of lost man ! Let the whole world adore the divine goodness ; let all men unite in thankfully acknowledging the richness of so infinite a mercy, and with a lively faith let each one say to God his Saviour, Great, O Lord, is my guilt, but greater is thy redemption !

What

* Serm. xxiii. de temp.

What return, my Brethren, can you make suitable to so much generosity, to so much love? What return do you resolve to make? Consider the life, the hardships, the painful toils and sufferings of Jesus Christ your Saviour from his birth in Bethlehem to his crucifixion on Mount Calvary: consider the labours of his evangelical mission, his fatiguing journeys by day, his watchings in prayer by night, his fasts, his hunger and thirst, his persecutions, his torments, his passion, his bitter agony and death: consider moreover, that he freely and by choice underwent all this for your sakes, to procure you happiness and everlasting life, and then see if an offer of your heart, if a tender of your service be too much to present him with. Mean and insignificant is the offer in comparison of the great things he has done for you; but of your own you have nothing greater, and nothing better to present. Present him that with sincere sentiments of humble gratitude, and he requires no more. The charity of Christ urges us, says St. Paul,* to give ourselves to him, knowing, that they who live, may not now live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again for them. For Christ died and rose again for all.

The knowledge therefore of what Christ has suffered and done for us must necessarily imprint upon our minds the most lively sense of religious gratitude, and call forth all the powers of our soul

to

* 2 Cor. v.

to love and serve him well. For should we remain unmoved and as it were insensible of the inestimable grace of redemption, after having known it, we should become the most undeserving of men. But to be insensible or to incur the just reproach of insensibility it is not necessary, that we should absolutely be either ignorant or forgetful of the favours we have received. For although we have heard, although we believe what our blessed Redeemer has suffered for us, although we may have been softened into compassion, and have dropt a passing tear at the rehearsal of his cruel sufferings, yet if that knowledge we have acquired, if that belief we profess, and if that transient compassion we have felt, has no influence upon our moral or religious conduct, we still remain insensible of our duty, because blind to our own essential interest, deaf to the voice of conscience, and equally unmoved at our Saviour's sufferings and his love.

There is a wide difference, says St. Austin,* between believing Christ, and believing in Christ. To believe Christ is to believe him to be our Saviour and Redeemer, true God and true man; it is to believe all he has taught us to be most certainly true. This every Christian, who knows the articles of Christian belief, most firmly believes. But to believe in Christ is in practice to adopt the doctrine of his gospel, to fulfil his precepts, and to comply with the ordinances of his holy law. Is
this,

* Serm. 144, de verb. Evan,

this, my Brethren, your practice, is this your belief? Is it your general intention to please and honour God in all you do? Is the general conduct of your lives directed to the greater glory and service of your Creator? Are your connexions in life formed upon the principle of duty and of well ordered charity? Are your conversations with men sober, upright, benevolent and chaste? Are your dealings just, open, candid, and honest? Are your expences regulated by the rules of prudence, moderation, and decorum, suitable to your state? Are your days and nights sanctified by the use of morning and evening prayer? Is the wholesome law of abstinence and fasting complied with according to your abilities? Is the great obligation of public worship duly fulfilled upon the days commanded to be kept holy?

We live in the midst of a corrupt world, in the midst of enemies to the cross of Christ. The powers of seduction were never more brilliant or more openly displayed than in the present age. A rage for dissipation, for idle amusements, and extravagance of dress has spread like a swelling torrent over all the land, and great must be our caution not to be carried down the stream with the intoxicating crowd to ruin and distress. The perilous times, mentioned by the Apostles,* are at hand, when false teachers shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord, who redeemed them :

* Tim. iii. 2 Pet. ii.

them : men lovers of themselves, without affection, without peace, without kindness, proud, impious, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, traitors, stubborn lovers of pleasures more than God, having indeed the appearance of piety but denying its power, men in fine corrupted in mind, reprobate in point of faith, and never attaining to the knowledge of truth.

To view the Christian world and to judge by what passes in it is there not sufficient ground to conclude, that Jesus Christ is little known by the generality of those, who by name profess themselves his disciples, and the followers of his holy religion? Upon those, who openly deny or impugn his divinity, sentence is already given,* because they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. But to that numerous class of Christians, whose thoughts, whose plans and projects are wholly bent on worldly gain, on worldly advantages and enjoyments, without the least concern or effort to provide for a future life, is the gospel of Jesus known? To those who by habit make the duties of religion give place to their amusements, to their indolence, to their temporal interest and convenience, are the precepts of Jesus known? To those who neglect to curb their anger, and to break their fiery temper into subjection, is the meekness and humility of Jesus known? To those who instead of improving their talents for

* John iii.

for the benefit of themselves or others, waste their time in one continued train of unprofitable and vain diversions, is the abnegation and the cross of Jesus known? The declaration of Jesus nevertheless is still true,* that all and every one, who are willing to come after him, must deny themselves, must take up their cross, and follow him, else they are not worthy of him.

Jesus Christ is the true light, who by his doctrine and example enlightens every man, that cometh into the world. But the world, that is to say, the great bulk of mankind living in the world, being either blinded by passion or misled by error, will neither follow nor behold the light. They chuse rather to remain in their cherished darkness,† lest they should see the evil they are doing, and be forced to abandon the system they have adopted. Too self-sufficient to listen to instruction in the business of salvation, too implicitly tenacious of their own opinion to believe themselves wrong, too strongly biaſſed in ſine by human conſiderations to admit the goſpel truths in their full force, they either ſeek to excuſe their conduct by the example of others, or to ſhelter themſelves under the ſhield of worldly prudence. But worldly prudence in eluding the force of truth is mere folly in the ſight of God.

Ours,

* Mat. x. 36.

† John iii.

Ours, they cry, is an enlightened age. In polite and human learning, in the progress of arts and sciences, in the discovery of new lands and seas, in its political improvements and mechanical inventions, it may be so. That is not the knowledge of eternal life. The present age may be enlightened, it may shine in the art of acquiring and squandering away a fortune; it may excel in knowing the luxuries and expensive vanities of life to greater perfection, than they were ever known by our more sober and more temperate forefathers. Such a knowledge may teach man how to gratify his sensual appetites, not how to sanctify or to save his soul. When Christians talk of an enlightened age, one would suppose them to mean, if they mean any thing serious, that the science of salvation is better understood, better taught, or better practised in the present, than in any former age. Is it so in fact? View the times, view the religion, view the manners of the present race, and judge. Does it appear, that Christians now-a-days are better grounded in the principles of true religion, better skilled in the truths of divine revelation, or better versed in the exercise of the evangelical virtues? Has not the bold and rapid progress of vice and immorality almost darkened or extinguished the light of faith in the minds of many? Destitute of that divine light, will christians presume to say, that they have discovered a more compendious or a more commodious way to heaven in these latter days, than was ever known in the most pure and early times of Christianity?

Christianity? Christians, do not deceive yourselves. See, if this presumption of an enlightened age be sufficiently founded for any rational man to rely on? See, if it be safe or prudent for you to rest your hope of salvation on it. There is a way, says the wise man,* which to a man seems right, and the ends thereof terminate in death. The way, that leads to life, we know is narrow, and few there are who find it.† Vain therefore and wicked would be the attempt of presumptuous man to shorten and enlarge it, as should suit their temporal interest and ease. Yet such is the attempt, and such the spirit of these innovating times. For a daring and licentious spirit has gone forth. The spirit of anarchy and confusion, the spirit of deism and infidelity, under the specious but fallacious name of discerning philosophy, has walked through the nations, and under the pretence of establishing the rights of man, has overset the established order of civil society wherever it has been admitted. At its savage command the social rights of man have been despotically suppressed, the earth has been drenched with human blood, the monuments of taste and art have been wantonly destroyed, and every distinction of rank and subordination has been arbitrarily blotted out. Religion mourns her altars overturned, her sanctuary profaned, her laws annihilated, her temples erased, her ministers displaced and persecuted, some massacred, some imprisoned, others banished and exposed to perish by want, by nakedness,

* Prov. xvi.

† Mat. vii.

nakedness, by famine, and every misery of a lingering death. Are these the characteristics of an enlightened age? Are these the marks of a wise philosophy? Is this their boasted system of reason and philanthropy? Great God! can men call themselves Christians, and avow these unchristian deeds? Can men call themselves the friends of a Christian people, and applaud the system of oppression, of rapine, and sacrilege?

Of the ancient philosophers St. Paul* testifies, that professing themselves wise they became fools. Because when they had known God, they glorified him not as God, but were lost in their own imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate sense, permitting them to do the things, that are not decent, being filled with all iniquity, with malice, with envy, with murder, with strife and deceit without trust, without feeling, without mercy. Such is the portrait, drawn by the Apostle's pen, of the heathen sages. Is it too much to say, that it also is a strong resemblance of the modern philosophers, the Voltaires, the Rousseaus, the D'Alamberts, the Diderots, and some perchance of our own countrymen, who have impiously levelled the shafts of wit and ridicule against all, that is respectable and sacred? But you, my Brethren, have not in this manner learnt Christ.* If yet you
have

* Rom. i.

† Eph. iv

have heard him, and still retain the principles of truth, which have been taught you in your earliest youth. For in vain will you make profession of being the followers of Christ, if you are either ignorant or neglectful of his precepts. Suffer not yourselves to be seduced by the example or smooth language of the many, who tread the broad way to perdition.*

Be ye therefore strong in faith, as the Apostle admonishes,† that you may resist the enemies of your salvation, and be fervent in spirit, that you may obtain the reward promised to your labours. Strait is the gate, that opens into life. Serious endeavours and strong exertion is required to enter through it. But be not dejected; the strife lasts not long; the victory is in your own hands; the glory is immortal, the crown everlasting. But remember no one shall be crowned, who has not strove conformably to the rules, which require, that he not only should decline from evil, but that he should also do good. No barren faith without good works, no speculative knowledge of the truth without practice, no public profession in fine of the true religion without conforming to its precepts will ever entitle you to the kingdom of heaven. The infernal spirits even believe and tremble, says St. James,‡ but their faith will never save them. The five foolish virgins, mentioned by our blessed Saviour as a warning to us,§ had their lamps, the emblems

* Mat. vii.

† 1 Peter v.

‡ C. ii.

§ Mat. xxv.

tion.* For she is the refuge of sinners, she is the comfort of the afflicted, and the help of all Christians. She is the mother of Jesus, she is also your mother in Christ the Saviour of mankind. The many festivals instituted by the Church in her memory, and the many Churches erected to God under her name and protection, are so many standing monuments of the devotion paid her by the Christian world. All the holy Fathers, as their writings testify, are unanimous in their encomiums and devotion to Mary the ever-glorious Virgin, the immaculate Mother of God. Let us cast ourselves at the feet of Mary, says St. Bernard,† let us put ourselves under her protection, and with the warmest affection of our hearts, with the tenderest emotion of our souls, let us implore her assistance. As long as we strictly confine ourselves within the limits of a relative honour, such as is paid to a pure creature, we need be under no apprehension of exceeding either in our praise or in our respect to Mary. Mary has been honoured by God himself; by Jesus the Son of God she was not only honoured but obeyed; by him she has been exalted to a greatness, which all the greatness of men and Angels cannot equal; from being his lowly handmaid she has been exalted to the unparalleled dignity of being his mother. The structure of the heavens,

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* The Saints interpose with God by their supplications, says an enlightened Prelate of the established Church, and meditate by their prayers. By this Christ is not wronged in his mediation: it is no impiety to say, *Holy Mary, pray for us.* Bilhop Montague, *In Antid. and of Inno.*

† De aqua ducta,

the formation of the sun, moon, and stars, is by the Psalmist called the work of his fingers,* but the exaltation of Mary was wrought by the might of his arm.† The Angel of God pronounced her blessed above all women, even before she had conceived by the virtue of the Holy Ghost. But since God has conferred that great and singular grace upon her, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed.

To these sublime prerogatives, which the bounteous hand of God heaped upon her, Mary added the lustre of her own virtues. In this she shines the pattern and bright model of perfection. Such was Mary, says St. Ambrose,‡ that her life alone is a perfect pattern for all to copy from. In her example as in the brightest mirror we may see, what in our conduct we have to correct, what to avoid, and what to pursue. To other Saints, says St. Chrysologus,§ God distributes his graces in certain portions, but on Mary he has conferred the plenitude of grace. Hence in grace and sanctity Mary is as far above all other Saints, as she is in dignity and rank. Who is she, that comes forth like the rising morn, says the spouse in the Canticles,§ fair as the moon, and chosen as the sun? She is the comely and the perfect one, in whom there is no spot. The virgin Mary, by a special privilege being ever exempt from the smallest blemish of sin, began from the very dawn of reason
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* Psalm, viii. † Luke i. ‡ L. ii. de Virg. § Serm. lxi. § Cant. iv.

and so continued to shine with greater and still greater lustre in the eyes of her Creator, till he was pleased to take her from the earth and place her above the brightest luminaries of heaven.

The virtues of Mary therefore were more refined and pure than those of other mortals, because in her there was no stain of sin to blot or tarnish their lustre. When I treat of sin, says St. Augustin,* I mean not to glance, even in the slightest manner, at the Virgin Mary, whom I always except, by reason of the honour and respect due to our Lord. Her patience, her conformity to the divine will, her obedience, her charity, her love of God, her humility, her purity of body and mind, have therefore a value and perfection in them, which belongs not to the virtues of other Saints. The Angel Gabriel at first sight declared her to be full of grace; he beheld her, as a rich vessel of election, replenished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and adorned with every eminent virtue, which made her the most blessed even amongst the most holy of her sex.

Such was the chaste purpose of her soul, that she would not consent to become mother even to the word incarnate, till assured by the Angel, that it could and would be done without hurt to her virginal integrity. Upon that condition only she cautiously consented in words the most humble and

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submissive :

* De nat: et gra:

submissive: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." So singular was her attachment to the virtue of virginity, so profound was her humility! Though upon the point of being raised to a dignity the most sublime, the most holy and divine, she still stiled herself the lowly handmaid of the Lord. Neither dazzled at the sight of her own superior excellence above all other pure creatures, nor elate at the thought of what the Holy Ghost had wrought within her, she humbly attributed all the virtues, all the graces, and all the greatness she possessed, to the sole power and liberality of the most High. He, that is the mighty, said she, hath done great things to me; holy is his name.*

Far from glorying in the unexampled privilege of her divine maternity, she would not disclose it even to her spouse, although in danger of being dismissed by him on that account. The silent resignation of herself into the hands of Providence on that occasion appears no less wonderful to men, than it was acceptable to God. An Angel appeared to Joseph and revealed the secret mystery.†

Mary no sooner had conceived, but an active zeal for God's honour and her neighbour's service prompted her to visit Elizabeth who at an advanced period of life was now six months gone with child. On her entering into the house of Zachary, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and the Baptist

Baptist at the very sound of her voice was sanctified in his mother's womb. Her journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem at a time the most critical and inconvenient speaks not only an entire conformity to the will, but also an implicit obedience to the commands of God, which she acknowledged in the edict of Augustus. For her submission to the civil powers was ever sanctified by the purest motives of duty and religion. Her regular attendance in the Temple on the appointed festivals of the year is particularly noticed by the Evangelist.* How instructive and how numerous are the virtues she displayed in the single act of her purification? The law was merely ceremonial, and however binding it might be with respect to other mothers, it bound not the virgin mother of God, who was literally exempt.† But to shun singularity and to give no cause of offence to the ignorant, Mary would plead no privilege, would insist on no interpretation in her favour, and alledge no excuse from the common ordinance. What troubles soon after, what afflictions, what trials of her faith and confidence had she not to undergo? What alarms from Herod's bloody designs against her Son, what perils from her sudden flight into Egypt, what apprehensions from the barbarous people of that inhospitable land? But over all these her patience triumphed, her faith and fortitude shone forth, like gold from the furnace, more bright and more precious.

On

* Luke i. † Lev. xii.

On her return from Egypt she went back to her solitary retreat at Nazareth, where having the model of perfection constantly before her eyes, she at leisure practised all those eminent virtues, which became her exalted rank. Remote from the noise and hindrances of a vain world, she with silent, but with rapid steps advanced towards the summit of perfection according to that plenitude of grace, which already filled her soul. How totally estranged was her heart from all terrene affections, how wholly free from all vain desires, how sweetly fixed on God? Her sublime contemplation and knowledge of the eternal truths, her devout recollection of spirit, her eminent gift of prayer, her daily conversations with Jesus her divine Son kindled in her bosom so pure, so ardent and so constant a flame of holy love, as no seraphic love can equal.

But according to the sweet disposition of divine Providence, Mary's virtues had not yet received their final polish. Afflictions and sufferings, from some cause or other, are the usual portion of God's most cherished favourites. Such was the portion of Mary, such was the portion of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus no sooner entered upon the functions of a public life, than he experienced the most bitter persecutions, contradictions and slanders, that Jewish envy could heap upon him. Mary felt them all. The sufferings of the Son were inseparable from the feelings of the Mother. His pains were

were hers, his afflictions were hers. The depth of her afflictions, of her pains and sorrows can be only measured by the intenseness of her love. Her love was strong as death. She was witness to the scene of his bitter passion, and in her tender heart felt every cruel wound he received from the malice of his enraged enemies. She stood near the cross, on which he was nailed, mingling her tears with the blood, that streamed from his hands, feet, and side; she beheld him fainting in the agony of death, she saw him bow down his head and expire. Then it was that the sword of grief, according to Simeon's prophecy, pierced through her very soul, and on that account she is justly stiled the Queen of Martyrs, as she is for her virtues the Queen of all Saints.

The glorious resurrection of Jesus from the dead renewed her joy again; but that joy at the end of forty days was damped again by his Ascension into Heaven. Such are the vicissitudes of human life, as long as it lasts. For though she could not but rejoice in spirit at his taking possession of that seat of bliss, which was due to his sacred humanity, yet his visible separation from her was undoubtedly a trial to the motherly feelings of her heart. If the desire of being with Christ was so strong in St. Paul as to make him wish for a speedy dissolution from the clog of his mortal body, how much more strong must have been the desire in Mary of being again united with her beloved Son?

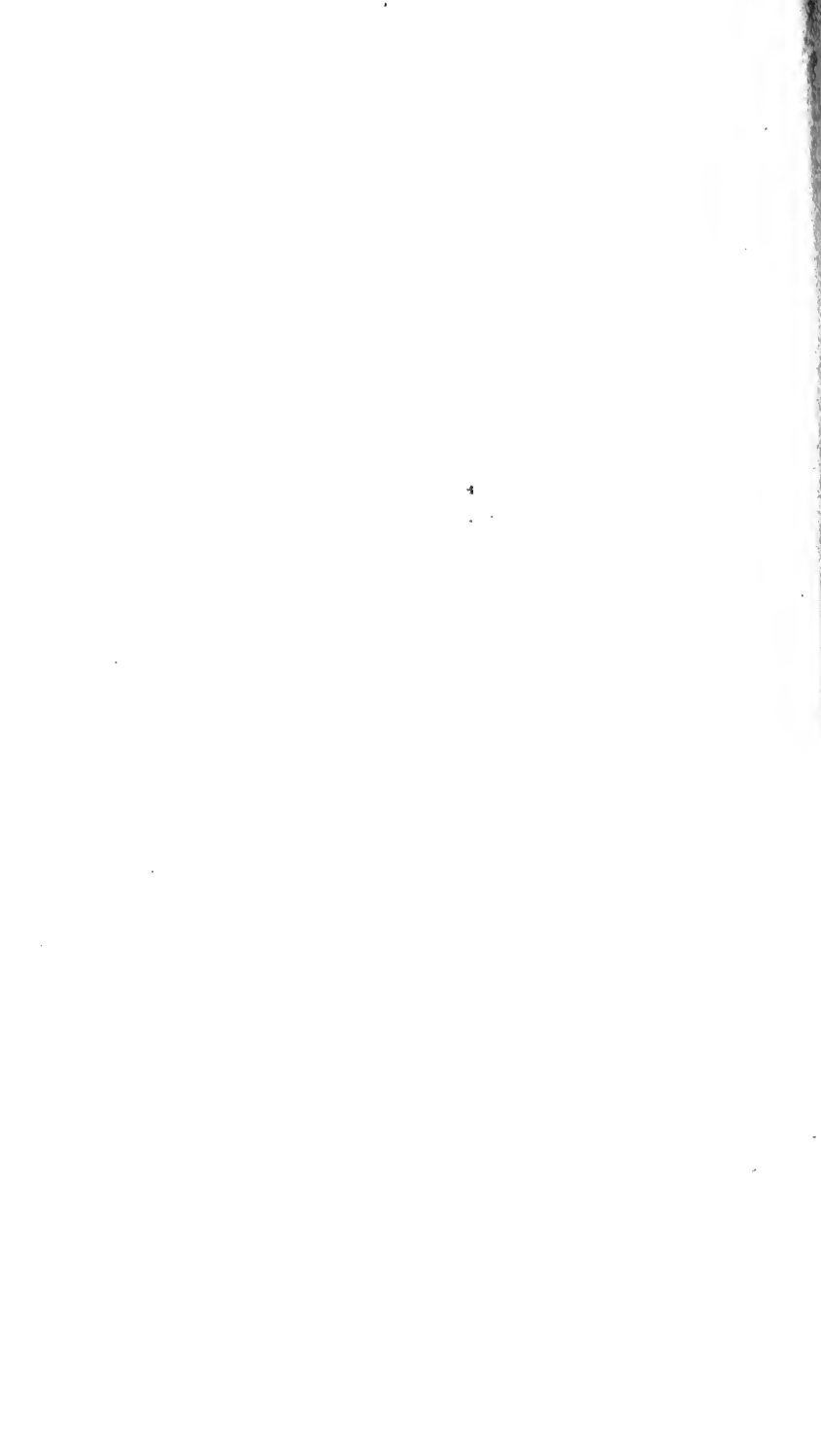
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The accomplishment of her desire was for a while deferred, that she might give to the world a more lasting example of her patience and submission to the divine will. For whether she lived, or whether she died, she knew that she equally belonged to God. From the strong desire she had of being with her Jesus in his glory she died daily.

The long-expected day of her triumph at length came. Soft, as a gentle sleep, death closed her eyes. A splendid train of the heavenly Host stood ready to conduct her to the throne, which was placed for her reception above all the thrones of Heaven, such as became the Father, the king of eternal glory, to prepare for the Mother of his eternal Son. Mary, when on earth, demeaned herself as the humble handmaid of the Lord. In reward of her virtues she became the Mother of Jesus, and is now exalted above every pure creature in the kingdom of Heaven. Though of royal descent she was overlooked by the vain daughters of Juda. Concealed in a lowly cot at Nazareth, her virtues were neither known nor noticed in the world; but behold she is now called Blessed, and her name is honoured in every quarter of the globe. When living in the midst of a perverse people, she had great sorrows, great troubles and afflictions to undergo. She bore them, as was meet, with an entire resignation to the divine appointments; they ended soon. But of the immense weight of glory, which they wrought

wrought in her, and of the unspeakable bliss, which she now enjoys in heaven, there will be no end.

Heaven, my Brethren, is the place we have been created for. It is the place of consummate happiness, the centre of all good without the mixture of any evil. In whatever happiness we rest exclusive of that, is a false happiness. Deluded mortals often place their happiness in earthly enjoyments, in sensual gratifications and worldly pursuits, unmindful of their Christian duties and forgetful of their last end. Death will soon break the delusive charm. Their eyes will then be shut to the fleeting vanities of a deceitful world, and the boundless scene of eternity will open to their view. Past enjoyments, past honours, and past possessions, shall be no more than an empty shade. Their works alone shall accompany them beyond the grave. Happy they, and only they, whose works shall be found full in the sight of God.





emblems of faith, but having no oil, the flame of charity was extinct. They notwithstanding composedly took their rest with the other five prudent virgins, when on a sudden in the middle of the night, and in the middle of their sleep, they were unexpectedly called upon to attend the heavenly bridegroom. They all arose; the five, who were prepared, entered in with him to the nuptials, and the door was immediately shut. Then came the other five, who had gone to provide themselves with oil, and begged to be admitted. But having foolishly lost the precious moment, they presented themselves too late, and the only answer they could get was, I know you not. Watch therefore, says our blessed Lord, and be ye always prepared, because ye know not the day nor the hour, when the Son of man will come. For not every one, that cries out to me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but who does the will of my Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Hence the slothful servant,* who had buried his talent in the earth and taken no pains to improve it, is ordered to be cast into outer darkness, where he must eternally weep and gnash his teeth in despair.

O my Brethren, be ye wise in time, and whilst you can, whilst the light of grace shines upon you, secure your election to happiness by good works. For the night will come, when you will not be able

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* Mat. xxv.

to see or to perform your work in the manner that is required. The salvation of your soul is a mighty task; it is above the power of nature unsupported by divine grace, and that grace is not usually granted but to those, who earnestly pray, and seriously labour to obtain it. We have powerful enemies to contend with. We have all the powers, that a flattering and deceitful world can muster up to seduce us. We have the devil, who is constantly upon his round, seeking whom he may devour.* We have in fine our own domestic enemies, our concupiscence and passions lurking within us, ever treacherous and ever ready to rebel at the first brisk impression that is made upon our outward senses. These enemies must be diligently watched, vigorously checked, and effectually subdued, before we can reap the crown of victory.

To make profession of the Christian religion and neglect its precepts, is in fact to make a mockery of the truths it teaches. To respect the speculative and to slight the practical points of religion, is to make a division in faith; it is to divide one part of the law from the other, as if all did not bind alike; it is to divide Jesus Christ from himself; it is in a word to attempt what Jesus Christ has declared not possible for any man to do, to serve God and Mammon at the same time. Strange and unaccountable as such a conduct may appear

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* 1 Peter v.

to cool reason, is it not evinced by facts, that such more or less is the conduct of the great majority of Christians in the world? Whether from the instability or depravity of the human heart, whether from inattention or a fond familiarity with the writings and language of deists and unbelievers the spreading evil may arise, is it not to be apprehended, that by many Christians such a conduct is thought not only excusable, but even justified by custom? Most certainly it too visibly appears, that the sacred principles of Christianity are either little known or greatly disregarded, that comparatively speaking few Christians in the world are acquainted with the great obligation of knowing Jesus Christ, and of believing in him as is requisite for salvation? I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, said our blessed Saviour,* because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent in their own conceits, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so it hath seemed good to thee. Happy they, to whom the Father has revealed the knowledge of salvation; more happy still, if with a docile and humble heart they cherish and embrace it; but most wretched, should they perversely shun or reject it.

Give thanks, my Brethren, for having had the grace to know Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Redeemer; humbly strive to ground yourselves in

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that

* Mat. xi.

that important knowledge still more and more You have dutifully learnt, what an incarnate God has been pleased to do and suffer for you: He once died for your redemption, he arose again for your justification, and is now ascended into heaven, that he may draw your hearts thither after him in expectation of everlasting glory. By his holy word he has taught you what to believe, what to practise, and what to hope for in the life to come. You have been timely instructed in that essential knowledge, upon conviction you freely believe, and embrace all the gospel teaches. Be ye ever careful not to betray the truth by any wilful error in matters of faith, nor to disgrace the truth by any immoral habit in the conduct of your lives. You are Christians; by profession you are the followers of Jesus Christ the crucified; by your baptismal engagements you are the champions of his holy law, and the imitators of his divine virtues: Scorn to debase your Christian dignity by stooping to sinful actions forbidden by the law. Through the merits of your Redeemer humbly beg in your most fervent prayers, that the Father of lights will so enlighten your understanding, and so direct your will by his holy grace, that you may always distinguish and always follow the way, that leads to eternal life.

DISCOURSE XIV.

UPON MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS CHRIST.

*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Luke
c. i. v. 28.*

WHEN the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to announce to Mary the mystery of the Incarnation, he began by addressing her in these words, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women. In these few but expressive words is comprised the most sublime and most complete panegyric, that was ever spoken of a pure creature. To be sanctified in his mother's womb was the singular privilege of the Baptist; to be prevented by the early infusions of divine grace, and to shine with the rich ornaments of grace, has been the privilege of Saints; but to be full of grace, and to be replenished with the overflowing spring of divine grace, was the prerogative of Mary. God is with all his creatures by the gift of creation and preservation; he is with all Christians by the grace of adoption; he is with his more faithful servants by the special commu-

communication of his love and sanctity. But he is with Mary in a manner far above all this, else the Angel had said no more than was applicable to the other elect of God, nothing which distinguished Mary from the rest of Saints. Yes, my Brethren, the Angel discovered in Mary something great, something new and singular, which raised her infinitely above the rank of God's most cherished favourites, something, which rendered her the most holy and the most blessed of women.

God by his preventing graces had so prepared the soul of Mary from the very moment of her conception that he would not suffer it to be sullied with the least stain of sin. This his own infinite wisdom seems to have required, as becoming his sanctity. For having decreed from all eternity to take flesh of her flesh in the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, it became both his sanctity and wisdom to enrich her with all those graces, and to sanctify her with all those singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, which become the dignity of the Mother of God. By the choice, which the Son of God made of Mary to become his Mother, he has honoured her above all the daughters of Eve: he has exalted her to a dignity the most sublime that a pure creature is capable of, to a dignity above all, that is not God. This divine choice then is the foundation of Mary's greatness. The quality of mother, to the Word incarnate lifts her to a rank of greatness, which no pure creature can ever

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ever equal. It is a greatness, which she has received from the liberal hand of God ; a greatness, to which she could have never had a title by any previous merit of her own ; it therefore leaves her, notwithstanding her singular eminence, in the rank of a pure creature.

In the boundless prospect of his creative power the Almighty cast an eye of predilection upon Mary. Before he formed the heavens or laid the foundations of the earth, he selected Mary in preference to all other possible beings, and predestined her before all other women to co-operate with his holy Spirit in giving a Saviour to mankind. Mary on her part was ever faithful in corresponding with the designs of God ; she was studious to improve the rich talents, that were given her, and carefully employed the whole plenitude of grace, with which she abounded, for her still greater and greater increase in sanctity and all virtues. By the first she claims our admiration and esteem, by the second she excites our imitation and practice in every perfect virtue.

From the testimonies of holy writ, from the primitive and constant doctrine of the Catholic Church, and from the unanimous consent of all nations, who have embraced her faith and lived in communion with her, it is evinced that the Second Person of the blessed Trinity is the true and only-begotten Son of the Father ; that he is consubstantial

tial and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost before all ages ; that for us men and for our salvation he descended from heaven, took flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary, was born of her in Bethlehem, and is called Jesus ; that the virgin Mary is consequently the Mother of Jesus, and truly the Mother of God. She is expressly stiled so by St. John,* so is she likewise stiled by St. Luke.† Elizabeth upon Mary's entering her house was filled with the Holy Ghost, and in ecstasy exclaimed, " Whence is it, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? Blessed art thou, O Mary, amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Glowing with the most lively sentiments of respect and esteem, Elizabeth was struck with astonishment at the sublime maternity of the virgin on one hand, and at her humble condescension in coming to visit her on the other. Let us enter with Elizabeth into the consideration of Mary's divine maternity, and from thence draw the sentiments of piety and esteem suitable to her merit.

Let us lift up our thoughts above all, that we behold great and wonderful in the creation ; let us fix our eye upon the incomprehensible majesty of God himself, and contemplate the immense, the eternal, and unbounded greatness of his Being, in respect of whom all the beings, that exist in the vast circumference of heaven and earth, are not so much as the smallest atom in respect of the universe. Full of this thought, let us now turn to Mary, and
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* C. i.

† C. i.

in her we shall behold the mother of this great, of this eternal, of this immense, and incomprehensible God. For since the eternal Son has deigned to assume the nature of man and to become incarnate in her womb, the substance of Mary is become the substance of Jesus Christ. For of her he was truly conceived, of her virginal substance his sacred body was truly formed, and to him she may truly say, Thou art my Son.* Jesus therefore being truly God, and Mary being the mother of Jesus, as the Scriptures testify,† she is consequently the Mother of God, as the holy Catholic Church has always believed and taught. Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople, in the fifth century wickedly attempted to dispute her this glorious title: but the Church assembled in a general Council at Ephesus, about the year 430, and condemned his heterodox assertion. The assertion was too glaringly repugnant to the words of scripture, as well as to the pious sentiments of the faithful, ever to gain credit in any Christian congregation, a few Greeks excepted. Mary therefore remains in full possession of her exalted title with the Catholic body of orthodox believers.

Mary in consequence of the Incarnation, entered into, as close an union with the Word incarnate, as can possibly be formed between a mother and her son. She carried him for nine months within her womb, she then brought him forth, she nourished

* Luke i. † John ii.

rished him with her milk, she careſſed him in her arms, and embraced him with all thoſe fond endearments, which uſually paſs between a mother and her firſt-born. The divine infant no doubt repaid her love for love, and that even at an age, when other infants are inſenſible of a mother's care. But as he advanced in years, he was pleaſed to ſhow for our example what his filial ſentiments were towards his virgin mother. For he conſidered her as his mother, treated her as his mother, and obeyed her as his mother. Jeſus then conceived for Mary all thoſe ſentiments of affection, of reſpect and duty, which every virtuous ſon has for a virtuous parent ; and Mary in the houſe of Nazareth received from Jeſus all thoſe filial offices of attention and obedience, which every good mother is entitled to from a dutiful ſon. That the great Creator of the univerſe ſhould make himſelf thus ſubject to his own creature, that the ſovereign ruler of men and Angels ſhould ſubmit to the parental command of a lowly virgin, that the Word incarnate in fine ſhould pay obedience to Mary, and ſuch an obedience, as the principle of duty requires from a ſon to his parent, is a myſtery we could never have conceived, had not the Evangelift in expreſs terms informed us of it. Jeſus went down with Joſeph and Mary to Nazareth, ſays St. Luke, * and was ſubject to them.

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* C. ii.

How glorious to Mary is this ineffable obedience of her son, and how sublime is the idea it conveys of her maternal pre-eminence? By this she is raised infinitely above the powers and principalities of heaven. They are but ministering spirits and servants of the most High; she is their queen, she is the mother of the most High, the eternal Word was obedient to her. Behold the Virgin now raised to a state of pre-eminence far beyond the reach of every other creature, even the most powerful; she is raised in dignity above every other thing, that is or can be created. God in his omnipotence can call into existence an endless variety of creatures far more excellent than those, which already exist: but however excellent or however qualified those creatures may be, there is no doubt, but they would all look up to Mary as to a superior being. They would only rank with the servants and domestics of God; the prerogative of mother of God would be peculiar to Mary. Infinite therefore would be the rank of Mary above them; for between the mother of God and the servants of God infinite is the distance, as St. John Damascen remarks.*

Mary is the most worthy mother of God, says the learned St. Bonaventure,† nor can God create a more worthy. He can indeed create a greater world, he can create a more exalted heaven; but
a mother

* De Doræ. Marid. Serm. i. † In Spec. Lec. v.

a mother more great or more exalted, than the mother of God he cannot create. In this the virgin has no equal. Above her there is nothing, but what is increated and eternal : below her there is every thing, that has been created, the humanity of her divine Son only excepted. God alone is her superior ; the most perfect of his creatures is her inferior. Look through all the ranks of the heavenly host, survey the shining choirs of Thrones, of Dominations, of Principalities, and Powers, view the other orders of celestial Spirits, and single out the brightest Seraphim about the throne of God : fancy him, if you will, in grace and perfection to surpass every other Angel, as far as the first Cherubim excels the meanest insect, that crawls upon the earth : this bright, this exalted Seraphim will still look up to Mary as to his queen and sovereign lady.

But, to carry the thought still higher, we know, that between this exalted Seraphim and God there is a boundless space, in which God may range a series of pure creatures one above the other more and more perfect without end. Let us now in imagination go over that boundless space, and by contemplating the progressive excellence of those creatures mount as by so many steps towards the summit of Mary's glory ; we never should come near it. For being exalted by the high prerogative of her divine maternity to a rank, which is infinitely

infinitely superiour to every possible rank of pure creatures, she shines in a sphere infinitely too high to be equalled by any other. The transcendent splendour of Mary's dignity outshines the lustre of all the Saints and Angels put together. For being the mother of their Creator she is queen of them all.

As the mother of Jesus she enters into as close an alliance with the three divine Persons, as a pure creature is capable of. In this quality she is become the virgin spouse of the Holy Ghost; for by the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost she conceived her divine Son. In this quality she is become the mother of God's eternal Son: for by his taking flesh of her flesh God the Son in his humanity is as truly of the same nature with Mary, as in his divinity he is of the same nature with the Father. In consequence of this ineffable alliance, which Mary contracted with the three divine Persons by being the mother of the Son, there can be no doubt, but the whole blessed Trinity concurred in heaping such treasures of grace and sanctity upon her, as became the wisdom, the power, and majesty of the God-head. For it seems fitting, that between the Son and the mother there should be a congruous similitude of spiritual gifts and ornaments, so far at least as the limited nature of a human

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man soul will admit, and that the dignity of such a mother should be suitably supported by a rich accumulation of such graces, as became the sanctity of such a Son. It was becoming, says St. Anselm, * that the blessed Virgin should be endowed with such shining purity, than which a greater under God cannot be conceived.

This the eternal Father owed to his Son's glory as well as to his own. For in consequence of the choice he had made of her above all other women, it became him in his wisdom to make her worthy of the Son, of whom he was the Father. This the Holy Ghost owed to his immaculate spouse, of whose virginal substance the substance of Christ's body by his ineffable operation was to be formed. This in fine the eternal Son owed to his virgin mother, for whom he undoubtedly entertained all those sentiments of affection, which filial piety naturally inspires. Now if Jesus so loves those, who love him, as to come in a special manner to them and to make his abode with them, † how strong must have been his love for Mary his mother, who on many accounts was so worthy of his love? She loved him as her God, as her Creator, and Redeemer: she loved him as the source and center of all good, she loved him as her Son with the most fond and most pure affection of a parent. Can it be supposed, that Jesus as her Son would let him-
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* Serm. de Concep.

† John xiv.

self be outdone in the duty of reciprocal love and affection?

But the love, which a dutiful Son feels for a fond parent, lies not confined in the heart alone; it bursts forth like an active flame, and shows itself by benevolent and generous acts of duty. Jesus, who is the most perfect model of all virtues, and who had taken upon himself even the duty of a son, so as to fulfil all justice,* undoubtedly accompanied the love he bore his mother, with all those acts of benevolence and generosity, which her rank and his own divine character seemed to require. Should any potent prince consent to leave his royal parent unendowed and unnoticed upon a level with the common class of his other subjects, he would most certainly be thought deficient in the point of filial duty and attention. We must therefore conclude, that the meek and humble Jesus endowed his beloved mother with such treasures of his sanctifying graces, as became a God of infinite bounty to bestow. From her he had received his body and that external likeness of features, which rendered him amiable in the eyes of all, who beheld him. His filial love therefore could do no less than make her a return of those internal beauties, that adorned her soul, and made it like to his.

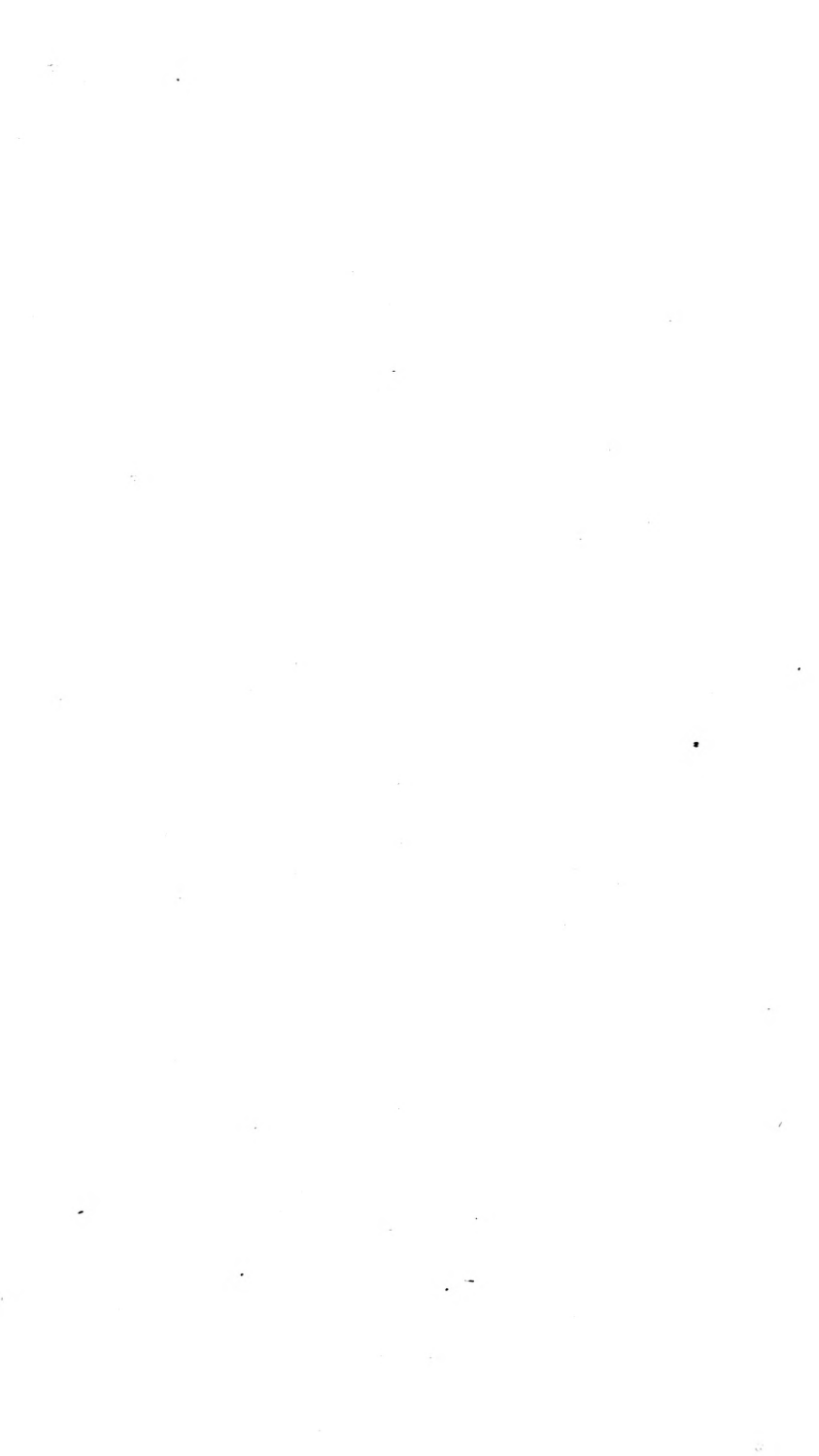
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* Mat. iii.

This wonderful communication of corporal and spiritual endowments, that passed between the mother and the Son, renders Mary the most holy, the most blessed, and the most honoured amongst women. By this she is become the seat of wisdom, the ark of the new covenant, our powerful advocate and intercessor with her Son in our most urgent wants. Her Son, whom she carried for nine months in her chaste womb, and when born suckled at her breasts, will refuse her nothing, that she asks. At her intercession he wrought his first miracle by changing water into wine.* To her maternal care he recommended us in the person of St. John, by his dying words upon the cross. § Her translation from earth to heaven has not lessened her charity, it has not altered the pious sentiments of her heart, nor diminished her powerful interest with her Son. Her zeal for the divine honour is quickened by the happiness she enjoys in God ; her charity for us the still banished sons of Eve is enlivened by the desire she has of seeing us in heaven to partake of the same happiness.

These amiable qualities of the Virgin, my Brethren, merit your attention. Her divine maternity claims your veneration, her powerful interest in heaven commands your confidence. Wherefore hesitate not to put yourselves under her special patronage, implore her intercession in all your wants, invoke her aid in the times of peril and temptation.

* John ii. § C. xix





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